HISTORY
VERSUS
CASUISTRY

Evidence of
The Ramajanmabhoomi Mandir
presented by the Vishva Hindu Parishad
to the Government of India
in December-January 1990-91

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The evidence submitted by the VHP was precise and within the parameters laid down by the Government. All its documents were centred on the point that the Babri Masjid had replaced a pre-existing Ramajanmabhoomi Mandir. Moreover, the documents were summarized in a covering note setting out clearly the only conclusions that could be drawn. On the other hand, the evidence submtited by the AIBMAC was no more than a pile of papers, most of them being newspaper articles written by sundry scribes and prolific in polemics rather than hard facts or rigorous logic. There was no covering note containing the conclusions which could be drawn from the various "documents." The VHP scholars who examined the pile, discovered that apart from raising numerous irrelevent issues, the "documents" took contradictory stands even on the non-issues they raised. All sorts of theories advanced by all sorts of cranks and crackpots had been thrown together, without so much as a thread of unity running through them at any point.

Even so, the VHP scholars examined carefully every "document" submitted by the AIBMAC, and commented on each one of them in its rejoinder sent to the Minister on January 6, 1991. The AIBMAC repeated its earlier

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Preface

Soon after it took office in November 1990, the Chandra Shekhar government was advised by the late Shri Rajiv Gandhi to narrow down the Ayodhya dispute to the specific point whether the Babri Masjid had replaced a pre-existing Hindu temple. The Stalinist clique which advertised itself as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) historians had been carrying on a campaign for quite some time on points that were totally irrelevent to this central issue. What was worse, the clique was ignoring altogether the hard evidence presented by a number of eminent historians and archaeologists. The press by and large, particularly the *Times of India* group of publications, had been playing up the Stalinist statements as if they were the only ones on the subject. The *Indian Express* was the only national daily to publish some well-informed articles on what Islamic iconoclasm had done to Hindu places of worship in general and to the Ramajanmabhoomi Mandir at Ayodhya in particular. The government announcement, therefore, did serve the purpose of silencing the Stalinists for some time. They were stunned by the prospect that the other side too was going to get a hearing, and that an amicable settlement of the dispute might be reached.

The first meeting between the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the All India Babri Masjid Action Commettee (AIBMAC) took place on December 1, 1990 in the presence of Shri Subodh Kant Sahay, Minister of State for Home Affairs in the Government of India. Shri Sharad Pawar, Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh respectively, attended the meeting in order to assist in sorting out the issues involved. After a preliminary discussion, the meeting was adjourned to December 4, 1990.

The second meeting proved quite promising. It was agreed that (a) both sides should furnish evidence to the Minister of State by December 22, 1990; (b) the Minister would make photocopies of the evidence

available to the two sides by December 25, 1990; and (c) the two parties will meet again on January 10, 1991 for reviewing the evidence.

The VHP was ready with its evidence on December 22, 1990. But as the evidence from the AIBMAC was delayed, it submitted its evidence on December 23 simultaneously with the other side. Photocopies of the evidence were supplied by the Minister on December 26, with a request that rejoinder from the two sides were to be submitted by January 6, 1991 so that the meeting on January 10 could save time and take up points that remained unresolved.

The evidence submitted by the VHP was precise and within the parameters laid down by the Government. All its documents were centred on the point that the Babri Masjid had replaced a pre-existing Ramajanmabhoomi Mandir. Moreover, the documents were summarized in a covering note setting out clearly the only conclusions that could be drawn.

On the other hand, the evidence submtited by the AIBMAC was no more than a pile of papers, most of them being newspaper articles written by sundry scribes and prolific in polemics rather than hard facts or rigorous logic. There was no covering note containing the conclusions which could be drawn from the various "documents". The VHP scholars who examined the pile, discovered that apart from raising numerous irrelevent issues, the "documents" took contradictory stands even on the non-issues they raised. All sorts of theories advanced by all sorts of cranks and crackpots had been thrown together, without so much as a thread of unity running through them at any point.

Even so, the VHP scholars examined carefully every "document" submitted by the AIBMAC, and commented on each one of them in its rejoinder sent to the Minister on January 6, 1991. The AIBMAC repeated its earlier performance and submitted another pile of papers in the name of a rejoinder. It was quite clear that the AIBMAC scholars had not even cast a glance at the documents submitted by the VHP. Obviously, the AIBMAC was in no mood to get down to brass tacks.

In the meeting held on January 10, 1991 it was decided that the evidence would be divided under four heads—history, archaeology, revenue records, law—and discussed by experts to be appointed by both sides. The lists of experts were to be submitted by January 17 and the experts themselves were to meet on January 24 for a preliminary discussion. Their findings on that date and thereafter were to be placed before a joint meeting to be held on February 6, 1991.

As the Stalinist clique had started sniping at the VHP in the meanwhile, the VHP thought it fit to take the public into confidence about the proceedings so far. So, after the meeting on January 10, it released to the press a Summary of the evidence submitted by the two sides. But strangely enough, this significant statement was ignored by the press which was busy once again playing up the Stalinist pronouncements.

The VHP submitted its list of nine experts on January 17. The list of AIBMAC experts was not forthcoming till January 23 on which date it named ten experts. On the same day, the VHP added the name of another expert so that the two sides had ten experts each.

But when the next meeting took place on January 24, four of the AIBMAC experts—R.S. Sharma, Athar Ali, D.N. Jha and Suraj Bhan—advanced the strange claim that they were independent scholars and should be heard as such. The Minister rejected the claim. The next demand made by them was more fantastic. They said that they needed not less than six weeks for studying and evaluating the evidence. The VHP turned down the demand and the meeting was adjourned to the next day.

On January 25, the VHP experts reached the place of meeting at the appointed time. But the AIBMAC experts failed to turn up. That was the end of the first serious effort made by the Government of India to get the two sides together for finding an amicable settlement of the Ayodhya dispute.

The VHP had cooperated with the Government in every respect. It had kept all the dates and provided pertinent evidence all along the line. The behaviour of the AIBMAC, on the other hand, betrayed from the very start a lack of will for a serious dialogue. The Stalinist clique on its part had left no stone unturned to torpedo the parleys.

II

The covering note of the Evidence and the Rejoinder submitted by the VHP to the Government of India are being placed before the public, together with the Summary which the VHP released to the press on January 10, 1991. The readers can judge for themselves. We wonder if the AIBMAC will publish its pile of papers and invite a public scrutiny of its case.

Out of the 28 Documents submitted by the VHP we are reproducing only two—Nos. 26 and 27. These two are not in the nature of original documents, but only summaries of what the revenue records say about the Janmasthan site at Ayodhya. For the rest of the 26 Documents the readers

are referred to the VHP publication—*Evidence For The Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir*. Summaries of what the documents prove have been incorporated in the covering note of the Evidence.

We have added six appendices. The first is an article by Arun Shourie on the worth of the evidence presented by the two sides. He wrote it immediately after the negotiations broke down due to obduracy on the past of the AIBMAC. The second comprises a debate between Professor A.R.Khan and the JNU historians on what the latter had been hawking as "the historical method," particularly in their piece, *The Political Abuse of History*. The third is an excerpt from Alexander Cunningham, identifying Sāketa with Ayodhya. The JNU historians have been claiming that the two cities were not the same, and building all sorts of theories on this separation. The fourth is a dialogue between A.K.Chatterjee and Syed Shahabuddin on the evidence offered by Tieffenthaler to the effect that the Babri Masjid was built on the ruins of a Ramajanmabhoomi Mandir. The fifth is a letter from Professor B.B. Lal in reply to the intemperate attacks mounted on him by the Stalinist clique, particularly Irfan Habib. The last carries two articles by the Belgian author, Koenraad Elst, on how the Stalinist clique has been using its power positions to distort history in the interests of a party-line. Altogether, the appendices add weight to the evidence presented by the VHP.

III

Soon after the negotiations started between the VHP and the AIBMAC, the Stalinist clique went into action. It could not sit and watch the AIBMAC being driven to the wall and admitting defeat. So, it launched a propaganda offensive in order to prevent the truth from reaching the public.

The first salvo was fired at the annual meeting of the Indian History Congress held at Calcutta on December 30, 1990. On that day, the Secretary of the Congress presented in the Business Meeting a resolution on the political situation in the country. Apart from mounting an attack on the VHP, the resolution proposed that the Ayodhya dispute be resolved by placing the Babri Masjid under the Ancient Monuments Act. This was in violation of the Congress' rules and traditions according to which its resolutions have to be non-controversial and are passed unanimously. Small wonder that many historians present in the Meeting objected to the controversial resolution and wanted it withdrawn. Professor B.R.Grover, a member of the Executive Committee revealed that he had advised

against presenting this resolution in the meeting of the Committee on the previous evening, and that his advice had been ignored. But the clique which has been in control of the Congress for years, remained adamant. The resolution was pressed and declared as passed in the midst of noisy scenes.

The big buffoon of the debate was the Stalinist Professor, R.S. Sharma. He had patched up a book, *Communal History and Rama's Ayodhya*, in December, 1990. Claiming to "call the VHP bluff," he was trying to bluff his way by hurling abuse at those who had offered hard and clinching evidence. In January, 1991 he led forty-two "academics" in a public statement that there was absolutely no evidence for pre-Babri Hindu temple at the disputed site. The AIBMAC was led to believe that it had found a powerful advocate for its case. But when the chips were down, their stalwart was the first to turn tail and run away from the contest. He needed six weeks to study the evidence on a matter on which he had already reached firm and final conclusions. It had been easy for him to make statements and allegations in the partisan press. But confronted with genuine scholars who placed authentic evidence on the conference table, Sharma and comrades found themselves cornered. Their talk was no longer that loud.

IV

The Ramajanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy has another and a more significant aspect. It has exposed once again the nexus that has existed for years between the forces of Islamic imperialism and the Stalinist subversion of Indian nationalism. Our failure to spot this nexus and expose it has had serious consequences, the most sinister of which is that in the current political parlance Islamic imperialism masquerades as secularism while Indian nationalism gets branded as "Hindu communalism."

Islam has never learnt to argue its case with facts or logic. All through its history, it has relied on the sword and street riots. In India, it used the sword for several centuries. After the loss of its political power, it has relied on street riots. The weapon has yielded and continues to yield rich results. It is, therefore, not an accident that Islam in India has always left it to the Stalinists to argue its case. If the argument succeeds, well and good. If it fails, the other weapon is always there. Not many people remember that the case for Pakistan was argued by the Stalinists, all along the line. The Muslim League had backed it up with street riots.

Stalinism elsewhere is not known for its love of Islam. What unites the two in India is their shared hatred of Indian nationalism. Subversion of that nationalism is their common goal. Stalinists have been doing the job from inside the Indian National Congress, particularly since their man, Jawaharlal Nehru, emerged on the top after the death of Sardar Patel in 1950. Islam has been doing it from outside by creating street riots on every pretext, thus giving a guilty conscience to our liberals at home and an apportunity to the human rights brigade for blackening our image abroad.

The Soviet Union has delivered a death-blow to Stalinism. It will not be long before it dies in India, whatever the damage it may do in the meanwhile. What India is faced with in the long run is Islam which will not stop using its patent method till it is cured of its self-righteousness. That is the perspective in which we view the Ayodhya dispute.

V

It is not very important for Indian nationalism, that is, Sanatana Dharma, whether the VHP succeeds or not in building a Ramajanmabhoomi temple on its original site. Indian nationalism will suffer a defeat if the current *Hindutva* movement fails to face and correct the numerous distortions which India's spiritual vision, culture, social philosophy and history have suffered in the process of appeasing Islam. Stalinism might have reinforced our leaders' proneness to pacify Islam on its own terms, but the basic weakness is a gift the Freedom Movement against British rule.

There is no evidence that Hindus, by and large, ever accepted Islam as a religion or the medieval Muslim rule as a native dispensation, before the advent of the Freedom Movement. It is during the course of that movement that national leaders floated the myths that Islam was a religion, that the Islamic invaders were native rulers, and that Indian culture was of a composite character. The leaders had hoped to gain Muslim cooperation against the British. The cooperation never came. But the distortions have continued to stay. There is little hope for Indian nationalism if the myths are not given up and the challenge from Islam not faced in right earnest.

The most mischievous myth floated during the Freedom Movement was that the British had created the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. The myth has not been given up, although the British have gone away and the gulf has refused to be bridged up. What is worse, the myth of Hindu-Muslim unity is being reinforced by a section of the present-day

Hindu leadership. They have been saying that it is the Indian National Congress which has created the Hindu-Muslim divide in order to consolidate a vote-bank.

It is high time for us to start facing some hard facts. The facts are that an overwhelming majority of Muslim Indians are the same as their Hindu brethren in terms of race, language, culture and a lot more, and that the only point at which they differ from the Hindus is their religion of Islam. Had Islam been like one of the spiritual traditions that originated in India, it would not have created the gulf which has existed and continues to exist between Hindus and Muslims. There is surely something in the character of Islam which alienates its adherents from their own people. That is the point which should draw our attention. That is also the point on which Islam has proved to be the most difficult. It simply refuses to be discussed and come to terms with reason or reality.

Christianity has been discussed threadbare in all countries where it has dominated the scene for centuries. So has been Hinduism in its own homeland. Why not Islam? Why should Islam be allowed to impose an emergency in India, so that one is free to praise it but cannot ask any questions about its God, its prophet, its scripture, its theology, its history? Islam enjoys the freedom to propagate its dogmas and invite non-Muslims into its fold. Why should non-Muslims be deprived of the freedom to examine those dogmas and find out their worth? Why should the Stalinists who never hesitate to tear Hinduism apart, cry wolf whenever Islam is examined?

The movement for rebuilding the Ramajanmabhoomi temple at Ayodhya will be a failure if it refuses to raise these questions. The triumph of history over casuistry in one instance will not mean much if it does not restore the freedom of discussion and dissent for which India's philosophical tradition has been famous.

New Delhi
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Publishers

Evidence for the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir

presented to the Government of India on December 23, 1990, by the Vishva Hindu Parishad

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1. Introduction

The Babri mosque stands on a high mound in central Ayodhya on the western ramparts of the ruins of an ancient fortress called Ramkot or Ram Durga or Kot Ram Chander. The Hindu contention that this structure was built after displacing the holy Hindu shrine of Ram Janmabhoomi, existing on the site believed by the Hindus to be the birthplace of Rama, and therefore held specially sacred by them, rests on a mass of literary, historical, archaeological and judicial evidence.

1.1. Sacredness of the site

Some persons seek to question the very foundations of this evidence by arguing that Ram is a mythical and not a historical character, and that it cannot be proven that he was born on the Janmabhoomi site. That objection can be answered by pointing out that such proof is not required according to the international standards prevalent in this kind of issue.

No one in the world has demanded evidence for the sacred character of the mosques on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Is it proven that the Dome on the Rock or the Al-Aqsa mosque was built over Mohammed's footprint in the rock ? Is it true that Mohammed landed there after a journey through heaven on a winged horse ? No one has questioned the grounds on which the Muslims hold these places to be sacred. And so, even the Israeli government upholds the right of the Muslims to their sacred places. Similarly, the grotto in which Jesus is believed to have been born, is protected as a place of pilgrimage for the Christians. The belief that Jesus was born there, is neither theologically important nor historically verified. Yet, the Christians' right to their sacred place is upheld without questioning.

Like followers of other religions, we do not need to offer a justification for considering that very site sacred.

So, the relevant question to be considered, is not : can you prove the grounds on which you hold this site to be sacred ? The relevant question is : is there proof that an old and persistent tradition among Ram devotees has considered the site as the sacred Ram Janmabhoomi, and that Ram worship took place there in a temple, before and until the Babri Masjid was built ? The evidence which is presented here, will prove that the question has to be answered in the affirmative.

1.2. Documentary evidence

(1) The literary evidence beginning with Valmiki's Ramayana, written, even on the most modest estimates, before the 2nd century BC, shows how Ayodhya became a sacred city in Hindu perception, a place of abundant sanctity and pilgrimage on account of its being considered as the city of Ram's birth, activities (*lila*) and death. The evidence also points to the fact that Hindu veneration has been for the site itself, which, as much as the temples or images standing thereon (if any), is in itself considered an object of worship.

The existence of a Ram Janmabhoomi shrine at Ramkot, marking what was believed to be the birthplace of Ram, and held by the Hindus as one of their holiest spots on earth in the 12th-13th centuries, is well-attested by its description in the *Ayodhya Mahatmya*, a sacred Hindu text forming part of the *Vaishnava Khanda* of the *Skanda Purana*. The Ayodhya Mahatmya narrates the supreme glory of the Ram Janmabhoomi shrine situated to the west of Lomash Ashram and north of Vasishtha Kund, specially of offering worship on this spot on Ram Navami day, Ram's birthday.

(2) All the historical literature after 1528 AD, when a mosque was constructed by Mir Baqi at a spot west of Lomash and north of Vasishtha Kund under the orders of the Moghul conqueror Babar, and using 14 black Kasauti-stone pillars of an erstwhile Hindu building, attest that the Hindus continued to consider this as their holy Janmasthan shrine, kept returning to it to offer their devotions, occupied its courtyard in due course, and built thereon a *Ram Chabootra* (cradle of baby Ram) and a Sita kitchen. There are numerous accounts that prove the continued celebration of Ram Navami festival at this place with great gatherings of people, and bitterness between Hindus and Muslims over the former's attempts to take over the place, leading to several disputes and clashes in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. This literature contains a mass of uncontroverted testimony from Muslims and European writers accepting that the Babri mosque was constructed on the site of the Ram Janmabhoomi, destroying the temple and using its materials.

Against this mass of testimony, it has been pointed out that Babar's own, otherwise meticulous, diary is silent about a temple demolition and mosque construction at the Janmabhoomi site. This seeming "argument from silence" has been conclusively explained by mrs. Beveridge in her English translation (*Babur Nama in English*). Babar reached the Ayodhya area on March 28, 1528, and camped there for a short period to settle the

affairs of Awadh. Unfortunately, in all known copies of Babar's diary, there is a break in the narrative between April 2 and September 18 of 1528. The loss of these pages could have occurred during the storm on May 17, 1529, or during Humayun's stay in the desert after 1540. Any reference to the destruction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple would logically have to be found in those missing pages.

To the literary testimony for the continuous tradition of Ram worship at the disputed site, and for the uncontroverted belief that the Babri Masjid had replaced a Ram Janmabhoomi temple, we may add another category of written evidence : the revenue records. These show that the Masjid/ Janmabhoomi area has been considered as Waqf property only after 1931 (and even then this was contested), and that it has always been known as "Janmasthan". In fact, most pre-British documents call the Babri mosque the "Masjid-i Janmasthan", or even just Janmasthan.

1.3. Evidence on the spot

Our archaeological evidence comes from the excavations conducted in the area immediately south of and adjacent to the Babri mosque. Here the fieldwork was conducted from 1975 through 1980 by the Archaeological Survey of India under the direction of prof. B.B. Lal. The excavations have revealed the existence of a series of burnt-brick pillar-bases at regular intervals. These are found arranged in parallel rows in the directional alignment in which a number of black-stone pillars are existing in the mosque.

Archaeological evidence of "robber's trench" clearly proves that some of the bricks from the pillar-bases were intentionally removed by those who destroyed the temple. However, stratigraphical evidence proves that these pillar-bases were built in the 11th century and they continued to be in use till the end of the 15th century. From immediately below the topmost floor, which apparently belongs to the general floor of the mosque, archaeologists have recovered a variety of Islamic Glazed Wares which are dated to different periods between the 13th and the 15th centuries. Evidently, the temple belonged to the period immediately before the construction of the mosque.

In the early 16th century when the mosque was built at this very place, the builders of the mosque used a number of black-stone pillars from the old temple existing here. Some of these pillars have been found used as load-bearing pillars for the arches of the domes of the mosque. Art-historical studies of these pillars show that they bear a large number of

images of gods and goddesses, such as the *Yakshas*, *Devakanyas*, *Dvarapalas* and *Ganas*, and sacred motifs, such as the *purnaghata*, lotus, *hansa* and *mala*, all of which belong to the Hindu iconography.

It is, therefore, clear that the evidence of the pillar-bases, the pillars and the glazed wares is conclusively in favour of the thesis that a temple has existed on the "Janmabhoomi" from the 11th through the 15th century, and that it was destroyed in the 16th century, to which period the "Babri Masjid" belongs.

2. Documentary evidence: Hindu testimony

The city of Ayodhya has undeniably been a city of great antiquity and a sacred spot to the Hindus for a long time. Giving the location of the city on the bank of river Saryu, and describing its area, prosperity and glory, Vālmīki has said in his Rāmāyaṇa:

कोशलो नाम मुदितः स्फीतो जनपदो महान् ।
निविष्टः सरयूतीरे प्रभूतधनधान्यवान् ॥
अयोध्या नाम नगरी तत्रासीत् लोकविश्रुता ।
मनुना मानवेन्द्रेण या पुरी निर्मिता स्वयम् ॥
आयता दश च द्वे च योजनानि महापुरी ।
श्रीमती त्रीणि विस्तीर्णा सुविभक्तमहापथा ॥

(Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa, Canto 5, Ślokas 5-7)

Many Purāṇas attest the fact that Ayodhya was considered one of the six holiest of the holy cities. To quote one:

अयोध्या-मथुरा-माया-काशी-कांची ह्यवन्तिका ।
एताः पुण्यतमाः: प्रोक्ताः पुरीणामुत्तमोत्तमाः ॥

(Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 4/40/91)

In all Hindu scriptures since Vālmīki, Ayodhya figures prominently and Lord Rāma is referred to as an avatara of Vishṇu.

Vyāsa incorporated the story of Rāma through the Rāmopākhyāna in the Vanaparva of his epic Mahābhārata. The earliest Sanskrit dramatist Bhāsa who lived before the advent of Christ, wrote his dramas 'Pratimā' and 'Abhisheka' based on the life of Rāma. Identifing Rāma with his archanāvatāra he writes:

नमो भगवते त्रैलोक्यकारणाय नारायणाय
ब्रह्मा ते हृदयं जगत्त्रायपते रुद्रश्च कोपस्तव

नेत्रे चन्द्रदिवाकरौ सुरपते जिह्वा च ते भारती ।
सब्रह्मेन्द्रमरुद्गणं त्रिभुवनं सृष्टं त्वयैव प्रभो
सीतेयं जलसम्भवालयरता विष्णुर्भवान् गृह्यताम् ॥

Kālidāsa the greatest classical poet and dramatist devoted the 10th Canto of his Raghuvaṁśa to the narrative of Vishṇu's incarnation on earth as Rāma. In the 13th Canto of his book, where the poet refers to the return of Rāma and Sītā to Ayodhya in the Pushpaka-Vimāna he speaks of Rāma as Vishṇu himself:

अथात्मनः शब्दगुणं गुणज्ञः पदं विमानेन विगाहमानः ।
रत्नाकरं वीक्ष्य मिथः स जायां रामाभिधानो हरिरित्युवाच ॥

There is not a single important poet or writer in classical Sanskrit literature who has not paid his best obeisence to Lord Rāma in one form or another. Instead of attempting an exhaustive enumeration of such works or citing illustrations therefrom, we may only mention the following ones:

(A) Classical Sanskrit Literature:

Poems

(1)Kālidāsa (C. 400 A.D.): Raghuvṁśa
(2) Pravarasena (550-600 A.D.): Rāvaṇavaha or Setu-bandha
(3) Bhatti (500-650 A.D.) : Rāvaṇavaha
(4) Kumāradāsa (C . 800 A.D.) : Jānakīharaṇa
(5) Abhinanda (9th cent.): Rāmacarita
(6) Ksemendra (11th cent):
  (a) Rāmāyaṇamañjarī
  (b) Daśāvatāra-carita
(7) Śākalyamalla (12 cent.): Udārarāghava
(8) Cakra Kavi (17th cent.): Jānakīpariṇaya
(9) Advaita Kavi (17th cent.): Ramaliṅgāmṛta
(10) Mohana Svāmi (1608 A.D.): Rāmarahsya or Rāmacarita (India Office MS. of 1970 A.D.)

Drama

(1) Bhāsa (2nd cent.)
  (a) Pratimā
  (b) Abhisheka

(2) Bhavabhūti (8th cent.)
(a) Mahāvīracarita
(b) Uttararāmacarita
(3) Diṅnāga (9th cent.)
Kundamāla
(4) Murāri (900 A.D.)
Anargharāghava
(5) Rājeśekhara (10th cent.)
Bālarāmāyaṇa
(6) Hanumāna
Hanumānanāṭaka or Mahānāṭaka
(7) Śaktibhadra (9th cent.)
Aścaryacūḍamaṇi
(8) Yaśovarman (8th cent.)
Rāmābhudaya
(9) Mayurāja
Udāttarāghava
(10) Anonymous
(a) Chalita RM
(b) Krtya RM
(c) Māyāpushpaka
(d) Svapnadarśana
(11) Kshirasvāmin
Abhinavarāghava
(12) Rāmachandra (12th cent.)
(a) Raghuvilāsa
(b) Rāghavābhyudaya
(13) Jayadeva (12th cent.)
Prasannarāghava
(14) Hastimalla (1290 A.D.)
Maithilīkalyāṇa
(15) Subhata 13th cent.)
Dūtāṅgada
(16) Bhāskara Bhatta (14th cent.)
Unmattarāghava
(17) Vyāsamiśradeva (15th cent.)
Rāmābhyudaya
(18) Mahādeva (17th cent.)
Adbhutarāmāyaṇa

(19) Rāmabhadra Dīkshita
Jānakīpariṇaya

Miscellaneous Poems
(i) Śleshakāvyas:
(1) Dhanañjaya (12th cent.): Rāghava-Pāṇḍavīya
(2) Mādhava Bhatta: Rāghava-Pāṇḍavīya
(3) Haradatta Sūri: Rāghava-Naishadhīya
(4) Chidāmbara (1600 A.D.): Rāghava-PāṇḍavīyaYādavīya
(5) Gaṅgādhara Mahādevakavi (18th cent.): Saṅkaṭanāśanastotra
(ii) Vilomakāvyas:
Suryadevī (1540 A.D.): Rāmakṛshṇa-Viloma-Kāvya
(iii) Citrakāvyas:
(1) Kṛshṇa Mohana: Rāmalīlāmṛta
(2) Veṅkaṭeśa: Chitrabandha RM
(iv) Amorous Khaṇḍakāvyas:
(1) Veṅkaṭadeśika: Haṁsasandeśa or Haṁsadūta
(2) Rudra Vāchaspati: Bhramaradūta
(3) Vāsudeva: Bhramarasandeśa
(4) Anonymous: Kapidūta
(5) Veṅkaṭāchārya: Kokilasandeśa
(6) Jayadeva: Rāmagītagovinda
(7) Kṛshṇachandra: Chandradūta
(8) Hariśaṅkara: Gītarāghava
(9) Prabhākara: Gītarāghava
(10)Haryāchārya: Jānakīgīta
(11)Harinātha: Rāmavilāsa
(12)Viśvanāthasiṁha: Saṅgītaraghunandana
(13)Viśvanātha: Rāghavavilāsa
(14)Someśvara: Rāmaśataka

Prose Romances and Champus
(1) Kshemendra: Bṛhatkathāmañjarī
(2) Somadeva: Kathāsaritasāgara
(3) Bhoja: Champu RM
(4) Vāsudeva: Rāmakathā
(5) Many other Champus such as Uttararāmāyaṇa Champu etc. based on Uttarakāṇḍa of RM

(B) Hindu Scriptures

Rāmāyaṇas
(1) Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
(2) Ramopākhyāna in the Mahābhārata (Vanaparva)
(3) The Yoga-Vāśishtha or the Vaśishtha Rāmāyaṇa
(4) Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa
(5) Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa
(6) Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa
(7) Bhuśuṇḍi Rāmāyaṇa
(8) Mahā Rāmāyaṇa
(9) Mantra Rāmāyaṇa
(10)Vedānta Rāmāyaṇa

Purāṇas
(11) Vishṇu Purāṇa (4th C.) (IV,4,5)
(12) Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa (4th C.) (2.21)
(13) Vāyu Purāṇa (5th C.) (II,26)
(14) Bhāgvata Purāṇa (6/7th C.) (IX,10-11)
(15) Kūrma Purāṇa (7th C.) (I.19,21, II.34)
(16) Agni Purāṇa (8th C.) (V. 12)
(17) Nārada Purāṇa (10th C.) (I.79, II.75)
(18) Brahma Purāṇa (Ch. 213, 70-175)
(19) Garuḍa Purāṇa (10th C.) (I.143)
(20) Skanda Purāṇa (11/12th C.) (II.30)
(21) Padma Purāṇa (12/15th C.) (Para 116, Uttara 24,43-48)
(22) Vishṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa
(23) Narasiṁha Purāṇa
(24) Vanhi Purāṇa
(25) Śiva Mahāpurāṇa
(26) Devī Bhāgvata Mahāpurāṇa
(27) Brihaddharma Purāṇa

Upanishads
(28) Rāmapūrvatāpanīya Upanishad
(29) Ramottaratāpanīya Upanishad
(30) Ramarahasyopanishad

Pāñcharātra Works
(31) Agastya Saṁhitā
(32) Kalirāghava
(33) Brihadrāghava
(34) Rāghavīya Saṁhitā

(C) Other Religious Literature

(1) Jaiminīya Aśvamedha
(2) Mahiravāṇacharita or Hanumadvijaya
(3) Sahasramukharāvaṇacharitam
(4) Satyopākhyāna
(5) Hanumat Saṁhitā
(6) Brihat-Kosalakhaṇḍa

For the last two millenia, the tradition of veneration to Rāma has existed in the Hindu society in one form or other. The earliest known inscription to testify to this is found in the Nasik cave inscription of 19th regnal year, that is 150 A.D., of Satvahana king Vasisthiputra Pulumāvi which contains the following eulogisation of Gautamiputra Satkarni:

(क) राम-केशव-अर्जुन-भीमसेनतुल्य-पराक्रमः
(ख) नाभाग-नहुष-जनमेजय-सगर
ययाति-राम-अम्बरीष-सम-तेजः

A series of subsequent inscriptions such a Gandhar inscription of Vishvavarman (423 A.D.), Chalukya inscription of Pulakesin I (543 A.D.), Mamallapuram inscription (8th century A.D.), Hansi inscription of Chahmana Prithviraja II (1168 A.D.) establish the continuity of this tradition throughout.

Iconometric evidence proves that the worship of Rāma as an incarnation of Vishṇu is at least as old as the time of Brihatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihir (5th century A.D.) who prescribes the details of Rāma's iconometry in chapter 57 verse 30. Till the end of the 12th century A.D., the canons of iconometry regarding the image of Rāma were laid down in the Matsyapurāṇa, Mānasollāsa, Bhatta-Utpala and Al-Beruni.

Not only the Padmapurāṇa 1.2.3. Harivaṁśa 1.41, Brahmapurāṇa ch. 180, Garuḍapurāṇa 1.202 Varāhapurāṇa ch. IV, but also the Gwalior inscription of the Gurjar Pratihar king Bhoja in the 9th century described Rāma as an incarnation of Vishṇu.

Besides Mānasollāsa, Daśāvatāracharita of Kshmendra, Gītagovindam of Jayadeva, Naishadhacharita of Śri Harsha and the Rāmacharitam of Sandhyākarnandin adulate Rāma as Vishṇu's avatara.

Even the ancient Jain writers such as Amitagati (11th century) spoke of Rāma as the all-knowing and all pervading protector of the World.

The evolution of the tradition of Rāma worship at least from 4th century A.D. is established by the early Rāma shrines surviving at ancient Rāmgiri hill (modern Ramtek) 30 kms from Nagpur, dedicated by the Vakataka queen Prabhāvatīguptā (5th century), Ambamata temple at Osian near Jodhpur, (11th century) containing images of Rāma-Jānakī and Hanumāna, Rajivalochan temple (12th century) at Rajim in Raipur district erected by Jagapala the minister of Kalacuri king Pritideva II and dedicated to Rāma by an inscription of 1145 A.D., and the Rama temple at Mukundapur in Rewa district (12th century) built by Malaysingha. Paintings depicting episodes from Rāma's life have adorned the walls of numerous temples in India and outside from the famous Deogarh temple in M.P. (late gupta period) to the Angkor Bat in Cambodia.

According to well researched conclusion of scholars, there existed at least five Vishṇu temples in Ayodhya in the 12th century viz.

(1) Harismriti (or Guptahari) at the Gopratar (goptar) ghat,
(2) Chandrahari on the west side of the Swargadwar ghat,
(3) Vishṇuhari at the Chakratirtha ghat,
(4) Dharmahari on the east side of Swargadwar ghat,
(5) Vishṇu (Rāma) temple on the Janmabhoomi.

The last three of these have been replaced on all accounts by mosques built by Mughal emperors.

There is both textual and archaeological evidence to prove that it was a common practice from early times for the devotees of Rāma (or Krishṇa) to offer worship to a temple image which was looked upon as being an embodiment of Rāma (archāvatāra). Instead of worshipping Rāma in his earthly human form, a practice had grown of devotees worshipping him in the form of one (Vishṇu) whose avatāra he was believed to be. The textual support to this practice is found in the Padmasaṁhitā, a Vaishṇava text dating before 1000 A.D. which says:

स्वतन्त्रो राघवः प्रोक्तः पदे पूर्वादिते यदि ।
चतुर्भुजो गर्भगेहे कल्पितः कमलासनः ॥
पश्चाद् विमानशोभार्थं कल्पितः परवानयम् ।
स्वतन्त्रो राघवे बिम्बे कर्माधर्थं प्रकल्पयेत ॥

(That is, when an image of Rāma is installed independently in the Sanctum for the sake of worship, it should have four arms).

This practice was quite natural, considering that Rāma was initially seen as an incarnation of Vishṇu, but came later to be seen as Vishṇu himself. This practice is corroborated by the images installed in the ancient Rajivalochan at Ambamata temple referred to ealier. In the former, the temple has been specifically dedicated to Rāma by an inscription (1145 A.D.) and been popularly known and revered as Rāma temple, but the image inside is that of four armed Vishṇu. In the latter, the images of Rāma and Sita are completely like Laksmi-Narayana but are identified as Rāma-Sita by the presence of the seated Hanumana at their feet. An inscription of 467 A.D. testifies to the installation by a devotee of the image of "Chitrakutsavami-Anantashayi" referring to both Rāma and Vishṇu.

An inscription of 467 A.D. testifies to the installation by a devotee of the image of "Chitrakutsavami-Anantashayi" referring to both Rāma and Vishṇu. The same practice is indicated by an inscription found at Ayodhya which says that the Gahadval king Chandradeva visited Ayodhya on 23rd Oct. 1093 on a pilgrimage on the occasion of a solar eclipse when he bathed in the Saryu and performed the worship of Vasudeva the protector of the three worlds. (भगवतस्त्रिभुवन त्रातुः वासुदेवस्य पूजां विधाय)

The long tradition of Rama worship as evidenced lay the numerous literary, scriptural and archaeological sources culminates in the 12th/13th century in the Ayodhya-Mahatmya forming part of the Skandapurāṇa which describes the various holy spots in Ayodhya, and extols the pilgrimage to the city as the best means to salvation. Along with various other holy sites associated with Rāma such as Goptar ghat, Svargadwar, Sahasradhara (all of which exist till this day) etc., the Ayodhya-Mahatmya profusely eulogizes the Janma-bhoomi shrine and gives its location. The merits of a visit by a devotee observing the vow on the Rāmanavami day to the Janmasthana has been described in Ayodhya-Mahatmya in the following words:

"A man who has seen the Janmasthana will not be born again even if he does not offer gifts, practise asceticism, go on pilgrimages or make sacrifice-offerings. A man observing the vow would be liberated from the bondages of rebirth on arrival of the Navami day because of the miraculous power of a bath and a gift. By seeing the Ramjamabhoomi he shall obtain the result that accrues to one who gives away a thousand red cows day after day."

(see Annexure 1 for relevant extract of Sanskrit text)

3. Documentary evidence : Muslim testimony

A large number of Muslim writers who have written detailed accounts of the regional history of Awadh since 17th century, based on older authentic contemporary sources of various nature, have unanimously stressed the fact that on the basis of Babar's order, the Janmasthan of Sri Ram Chandra at Kot Ram Chander, Pargana Haveli, Awadh, which comprised not only the private apartments (mahal sarai) of King Dashrath and Sri Ram but also a temple and a kitchen popularly known as Sita Ki Rasoi, were demolished and a mosque constructed thereupon in 1528 A.D. under the guidance of the Commander Mir Baqi and the patronage of a Muslim faqir named Sayed Musa Ashikan.

The earliest of such authors is none other than the granddaughter of Moghul emperor Aurangzeb. Many of these Muslim writers were residents of Awadh and some were eye-witness to or participants in the Hindu-Muslim clashes or the dispute in 1855.

Let us now see what the Muslim writers have said :

1) Abul Fazl (1598 AD)

Abul Fazl, the author of *Akbar Nama/Ain-i-Akbari* (late 16th century) is an eminent writer of the Moghul age who has categorically associated Awadh (Ayodhya) with the residential place (*banga*) of Sri Ram Chandra who during the Treta age was the embodiment of both the spiritual sovereign supremacy as well as the mundane kingly office. Abul Fazl also testifies thet Awadh (Ayodhya) was esteemed as one of the holiest places of antiquity. He reports that Ramnavami festival, marking the birthday of Rama continues to be celebrated in a big way. As in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazl is basically concerned with the institutional and administrative system of the Moghuls (under Akbar), he does not provide any further detail about the disputed building ; nor, for that matter, about any shrines or buildings in general.

2) *Sahifa-i Chahal Nasaih Bahadur Shahi*, written by the daughter of Bahadur Shah Alamgir during the late 17th century/early 18th century.

Out of the above *Chahal Nasaih* ("Forty Advices"), twenty-five instructions were copied and incorporated in the manuscript entitled *Nasihat-i Bist-o-Panjam Az Chahal Nasaih Bahadur Shahi* in 1816 AD, which was preserved in the Library of Mirza Haider Shikoh s/o Mirza

Suleman Shikoh. This is the oldest known account of the destruction of Ram Janmabhoomi for construction of the Babri Mosque, and its author is none other than Aurangzeb's granddaughter.

Mirza Jan, the author of *Hadiqa-i-Shahada*, 1856, Lucknow, has reproduced the above text in Persian on pp.4-7 of his book. The text runs as follows:

"... the mosques built on the basis of the king's orders (*ba farman-i Badshahi*) have not been exempted from the offering of the *namaz* and the reading of the *Khutba* [therein]. The places of worship of the Hindus situated at Mathura, Banaras and Awadh, etc., in which the Hindus (*kuffar*) have great faith — the place of the birthplace of Kanhaiya, the place of Rasoi Sita, the place of Hanuman, who, according to the Hindus, was seated by Ram Chandra over there after the conquest of Lanka — were all demolished for the strength of Islam, and at all these places mosques have been constructed. These mosques have not been exempted from *juma* and *jamiat* (Friday prayers). Rather it is obligatory that no idol worship should be performed over there and the sound of the conch shell should not reach the ear of the Muslims ..." (see Annexure 2)

3) *Hadiqa-i-Shahada* by Mirza Jan (1856), pages 4-7.

The author was an eye-witness and an active participant in the *jihad* led by Amir Ali Amethawi during Wazid Ali Shah's rule in 1855 for recapture of Hanumangarhi from the Hindus. His book was ready just after the failure of the *jihad* and was published the following year (1856) in Lucknow. In Chapter IX of his book, entitled *Wazid Ali Shah Aur Unka Ahad* ("Wazid Ali Shah and His Regime"), we find his account of construction of the Babri mosque.

Mirza Jan who claims to have gone through various old sources says in his own account as follows: "The past Sultans encouraged the propagation and glorification of Islam and crushed the forces of the unbelievers (*kuffar*), the Hindus. Similarly, Faizabad and Awadh were also purged of this mean practice [of *kufr*]. This [Awadh] was a great worshipping centre and the capital of [the kingdom of] Rama's father. Where there was a large temple, a big mosque was constructed and where there was a small *mandaf*, there a small *kanati* masjid was constructed. The temple of Janmasthan was the original birthplace (*masqat*) of Ram, adjacent to which is *Sita Ki Rasoi*, Sita being the name of his wife. Hence at that site, a lofty (*sarbaland*) mosque has been built by Babar Badshah under the guidance of Musa Ashikan... That mosque is till date popularly known as Sita Ki Rasoi..." (see Annexure 3)

4) Muhammad Asghar's petition (1858).

Muhammad Asghar, *khatib* and *muazzan* of the Babri Masjid, filed a representation dated 30.11.1858, in case no 884, *muhalla* Kot Ram Chandra, Ajodhya to the British Government. In this complaint against the Bairagis of Janmasthan, he alleged that the Hindus had occupied the mosque, constructed an earthen mound therein, hoisted a flag on a high pole, installed a deity, started puja, wrote the name of Rama all over the walls and so on. The *muazzin* also observes that in the outer space of the constructed Babri mosque (i.e. in the courtyard within the walled boundaries of the mosque), there had been Janmasthan lying desolate where the Hindus had been worshipping for hundreds of years. This confirms the fact that eventhough the site of Janmasthan had been covered by the Babri Masjid, the Hindus had been worshipping in the open space for hundreds of years, i.e. even during the Moghul and the Nawabi periods, and that they had maintained their claim on the entire Janmasthan area.
(see Annexure 4)

5) *Fasana-i Ibrat* by the Urdu novelist Mirza Rajab Ali Beg Surur .

Dr. Zaki Kakorawi has appended an excerpt from this book by Surur (1787-1867) in his work. The excerpt reads as follows: "During the reign of Babar Badshah, a magnificent mosque was constructed in Awadh at a place which is associated with Sita ki Rasoi. This was Babari mosque. As during this period the Hindus could not dare to offer any resistance, the mosque was constructed under the benign guidance of Saiyed Mir Ashikan. Its date of construction could be reckoned from [the words] *Khair-Baqi*. And in the *Ram Darbar*, a mosque was constructed by Fidai Khan, the *subedar*."

After further describing the construction of another mosque at Hanuman Garhi by Aurangzeb, the author states that later on, after the defeat of Nawab Shujauddaula at Buxar, the Bairagis occupied the Garhi: "The Bairagis mitigated the mosque at Hanuman Garhi and constructed a temple [thereon]. And then, open prayers were henceforth offered [by the Bairagis] in the Babri mosque comprising the site of Sita ki Rasoi. The [Nawabi] administration could not do anything about it."

It may be noted that Surur mentioned the *Sahifa-i Bahadurshahi*, copied in 1816, as the source from which his observations could be verified by anybody interested. (see Annexure 5)

6) *Tarikh-i Awadh* or *Muraqqa-i Khusrawi* by Sheikh Mohammed Azmat Ali Kakorawi Nami (1869).

Kakorawi (1811-1893) wrote this book in 1869, but it did not see the light of day for more than a century. When dr. Zaki Kakorawi prepared a press copy, the F.A. Ahmad Memorial Committee agreed to publish the book, in 1986, but without the chapter on the 1855 episode. Subsequently, dr. Kakorawi published this chapter independently in 1987, under the title: *Amir Ali Shah aur Markah-i Hanuman Garhi.*

It contains this account :"Awadh was the capital of the father of Lachhman and Ram. [There,] under the guidance of Musa Ashikan, a magnificent Babri mosque was constructed at the site of the temple within the premises of Janmasthan, which was popularly known amongst the Hindus as Sita ki Rasoi. The date of construction can be reckoned from *Khair Baqi*... And a mosque was also constructed at the site of *Ram Darbar* by Fidai Khan, *subedar*, which was later demolished and mitigated by the Hindus." (see Annexure 6)

7) *Zia-i Akhtar* by Haji Muhammed Hasan (Lucknow 1878), p.38-39.

The author states :"The mosque which had been built by Saiyid Musa Ashikan in 923 AH in compliance with the order of Zahiruddin Badshah, Delhi, after demolishing the private apartments (*mahal sarai*) of Raja Ram Chander and the kitchen of Sita, as well as the second mosque built by Muiuddin Aurangzeb, Alamgir Badshah, [in fact] both these mosques had developed cracks at various places because of the ageing character. Both these mosques have been gradually mitigated by the Bairagis and this very fact accounts for the riot. The Hindus have great hatred for the Muslims..." (see Annexure 7)

8) *Gumgashte Halat-i Ajodhya Awadh* ("Forgotten Events of Ayodhya"), i.e. *Tarikh-i Parnia Madina Alwaliya* (in Persian) (Lucknow 1885), by Maulvi Abdul Karim.

The author, who was then the *imam* of the Babri Masjid, while giving a description of the *dargah* of Hazrat Shah Jamal Gojjri states: "To the east of this *dargah* is *mahalla* Akbarpur, whose second name is also Kot Raja Ram Chander Ji. In this Kot, there were a few *burjs* [= towery big halls]. Towards the side of the western *burj*, there was the house of birthplace (*makan-i paidaish*) and the kitchen (*bawarchi khana*) of the above-mentioned Raja. And now, this premises is known as Janmasthan and

Rasoi Sita Ji. After the demolition and mitigation of these houses [viz. Janmasthan and Rasoi Sita Ji], Babar Badshah got a magnificent mosque constructed thereon."

In this work, the author has referred to numerous contemporary sources. It was translated into Urdu by his grandson Maulvi Abdul Gaffar in 1979. (see Annexure 8)

9)*Kaisar-ul-Tawarikh ya Tawarikh-i-Awadh* by Kamaluddin Haidar Hosni al Hussaini al Mashahadi (Lucknow 1896), vol.II, p.100-112.

This author gives the same account of the construction of the Babri mosque as given in *Muraqqah-i Khusrawi.*

10)*Tarikh-i Awadh* by Alama Muhammad Najamulghani Khan Rampuri (1909).

Dr. Zaki Kakorawi has brought out an abridged edition of this book. An excerpt from vol.II (pp.570-575) of this edition runs as follows :

a) "Babar built a magnificent mosque at the spot where the temple of Janmasthan of Ramchandra was situated in Ayodhya., under the patronage of Saiyid Ashikan, and Sita ki Rasoi is situated adjacent to it. The date of construction of the mosque is *Khair Baqi* (923 AH). Till date, it is known as Sita ki Rasoi. By its side stands that temple. It is said that at the time of the conquest of Islam there were still three temples, viz. Janmasthan, which was the birthplace of Ram Chanderji, Swargadwar alias Ram Darbar, and the Treta ka Thakur. Babar built the mosque after having demolished Janmasthan."

b) "...in short, the turbulence [of 1855] reached such a stage that apart from the mitigated mosque at Hanuman Garhi, the Hindus built a temple in the courtyard of Babri Masjid where Sita ki Rasoi was situated..."

c) "...Ultimately, on Zilqadda 1271 AH [July 1855], for the tenth or twelfth time, nearly two or three hundred Muslims gathered at Babri Masjid which is situated inside the Sita ki Rasoi..."

It is important to observe that the learned author used as many as eighty-one sources (manuscripts and books) covering the history of India/ Awadh from the 17th-19th centuries, comprising mostly Muslim authors, though a few Hindu and European writers have also been referred to.

In parenthesis, we remark that the calculation of the year 923 from the numerical values of the letters making up the expression *"Khair Baqi"* (as before the adoption of Indian numerals, letters were still used sometimes

to encode numbers), rests on a mistake. The full expression which is repeated in the inscription on the Masjid, is *"Bavad Khair Baqi"*, of which the numeral value adds up to 935, the AH year partly coinciding with 1528 AD. (see Annexure 9).

11) *Hindustan Islami Ahad Mein* by Maulana Hakim Sayid Abdul Hai.

Maulana Hakim Sayid Abdul Hai (d.1923), an eminent scholar on the history of Islamic culture and also rector of Nadwatul-Ulama, wrote on "India under Islamic Rule" in Arabic, in the early 20th century. The book was published in Hyderabad in 1972. It was translated into Urdu and published with a foreword by his worthy son, Maulana Abdul Hasan Nadwi, alias Ali Mian, by the Nadwatul-Ulama, Lucknow 1973. An English translation was published in 1977.

The book contained a chapter on "The Mosques of Hindusthan" (*Hindustan ki Masjidein*), giving at least six instances of the construction of the mosques on the very sites of the Hindu temples demolished by the Indian Muslim rulers during the 12th-17th centuries. As regards Babri Masjid, he writes :"This mosque was constructed by Babar at Ajodhya which the Hindus call the birthplace of Ram Chanderji. There is a famous story about his wife Sita. It is said that Sita had a temple here in which she lived and cooked for her husband. On that very site Babar constructed this mosque..." (see Annexure 10)

12) *Asrar-i Haqiqat* by Lachmi Narain Sadr Qanungo, assisted by Munshi Maulvi Hashmi (Lucknow 1923).

The author, L.N.S. Qanungo, says that the book has been written with the active help of and in consultation with Munshi Maulvi Hashim, who has collected all the material and agreed to the contents of the book.

This is a unique book which is a product of joint efforts by a Hindu and a Muslim. Significantly, this book also confirms all that has been said in the *Gumgashte Halat-i Ajodhya* on the demolition of Janmasthan and the construction of the Babri mosque.

4. Documentary evidence : European accounts

We now present a brief summary of all the post-Babar accounts of Ayodhya recorded by European travellers, archaeologists and scholars.

1) Travel report by William Finch, the European traveller (1608-11).

Finch, who visited Ayodhya, confirms the existence of the ruins of Ramkot, the castle of Ram where Hindus believed he had incarnated thousands of years ago. (see Annexure 11 for the relevant extract from William Foster, ed.: *Early Travels in India*, 1583-1619, London 1921 p.176)

2) *History and Geography of India*, by Joseph Tieffenthaler, (published in French by Bernoulli in 1785).

Tieffenthaler, the Austrian Jesuit priest who stayed in Awadh in 1766-71, reports that Babar destroyed the birth-place temple of Ram and constructed a mosque by using its pillars. However, Hindus refused to give up the place and in spite of the Moghuls' efforts to prevent them, they were coming to the place for worship. They had constructed the Ram Chabootra in the mosque's courtyard, which they used to perambulate thrice, then to prostrate on the ground. They practised their devotion at the chabootra and in the mosque. Tieffenthaler testifies that they continued celebrating Ram Navami with great gatherings of people from all over India. (see Annexure 12, containing pp.253-254 of Tieffenthaler's *Description Historique et Geographique de l'Inde*, along with an English translation)

3) Report by Montgomery Martin, British Surveyor (1838).

He proposes that the Masjid was built on the ruins of the Ramkot itself, rather than of a building constructed by Vikramaditya, and that the pillars used in the mosque have been taken from Ram's palace, the figures thereon having been damaged by the bigot (i.e. Babar). (see Annexure 13 for pp. 335-336 of Martin: *History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, vol.II).

4) East India Company Gazetteer, by Edward Thornton (1854).

This mentions that Babar's mosque is embellished with 14 columns of elaborate workmanship taken from the old Hindu temple. It also mentions that the Hindus practised pilgrimage and devotion on the Ram Chabootra which they believed to be Ram's cradle. (see Annexure 14 for pp.739-740 of Thornton : *Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of the East India Company*)

5) *Encyclopedia of India* by Surgeon General Edward Balfour (1858).

It mentions that Ayodhya has three mosques on the sites of three Hindu shrines : the Janmasthan, the site where Ram was born ; the Swargadwar Mandir, where his remains were buried ; and the Treta ka Thakur, famed as the scene of one of his great sacrifices. (see Annexure 15 for p.56 of Balfour: *Encyclopaedia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia*)

6) *Historical Sketch of Faizabad* by P. Carnegie (1870).

He describes the Ramkot with all its bastions and palaces and says that the columns of Janmasthan temple made of strong close-grained dark slate-coloured Kasauti (or touch-stone) and carved with different devices were used by Muslims in the construction of Babar's mosque. Carnegy also notes the construction of the new Janmasthan temple on the neighbouring plot of land in the early 18th century. He reports that until 1855 both Hindus and Muslims worshipped alike in the mosque-temple. (see Annexure 16 for Carnegie: *Historical Sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad, Zilla Fyzabad, with the old capitals Ajudhia and Fyzabad*, Lucknow 1970, p.5-7, 19-21 and a photograph taken by Carnegy).

7) *Gazetteer of the Province Oudh* (1877).

It confirms that the Moghuls destroyed three important Hindu temples at Ayodhya and constructed mosques thereon. Babar built the Babri mosque on Ram Janmabhoomi in 1528, Aurangzeb built one on Swargadwar, and either Aurangzeb or Shahjahan did the same on Treta ka Thakur. All other assertions from Carnegie's *Historical Sketch of Faizabad* are confirmed in this Gazetteer. (see Annexure 17 : *Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh*, vol.I, 1877, pp.6-7).

8) *Faizabad Settlement Report* (1880).

The report confirms that Babar built the Babri mosque in 1528 on the site of Janmasthan temple marking the birthplace of Ram. On Swargadwar Mandir, Aurangzeb constructed a mosque, and on Treta-ka-Thakur the same was done by either Aurangzeb or Shahjahan, according to the well-known Mohammedan practice of enforcing their religion on others. The columns of the destroyed Janmasthan temple have been used in the Babri mosque.

9) *Imperial Gazetteer of Faizabad* (1881).

It confirms the construction of three Moghul mosques at Ayodhya on the site of three celebrated shrines, viz. Janmasthan, Swargadwar and Treta-ka-Thakur. (see Annexure 18: *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series. United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, vol.II, pp.338-9)

10) Court verdict by Col. F.E.A. Chamier, District Judge, Faizabad (1886).

In delivering his judgment in Civil Appeal No. 27 of 1885, the Judge, after visting the Babri mosque site for personal inspection, observed: "It is most unfortunate that a Masjid should have been built on land specially held sacred by the Hindus, but as that event occurred 356 years ago, it is too late now to remedy the grievance." (see Annexure 19: extract reproduced in *Muslim India*, March 1986, p.107)

11) Archaeological Survey of India Report by A. Fuhrer (1891).

Fuhrer accepts that Mir Khan built the Babri mosque on the site of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, using many of its columns. He also confirmed that Aurangzeb had constructed two other mosques in Ayodhya on the sites of Swargadwar and Treta-ka-Thakur temples. (see Annexure 20 : Fuhrer : *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-West Provinces and Oudh*, ASI Report 1891, pp.296-297)

12) *Barabanki District Gazetteer* by H.R. Neville (1902).

Neville reports that "numerous disputes have sprung up from time to time between the Hindu priests and the Mussalmans of Ayodhya with regard to the ground on which formerly stood the Janmasthan temple, which was destroyed by Babar and replaced by a mosque". (see Annexure 21 : Neville: *Barabanki District Gazetteer*, Lucknow 1902, p.168-169)

13) *Faizabad District Gazetteer* by H.R. Neville (1905).

This chronicle confirms that the Janmasthan temple marking the birthplace of Ram at Ramkot was destroyed by Babar and replaced by a mosque using the materials and columns of the temple. In spite of its desecration, Hindus continued to regard it as a holy spot. The desecration caused numerous disputes and clashes between the communities. (see Annexure 22 : Neville : *Fyzabad District Gazetteer*, Lucknow 1905, pp.172-177)

14) *Babur Nama in English* by Annette Beveridge (1920).

After analysing the inscriptions on the Babri mosque and studying the archaeological features, she says that Babur was impressed with the dignity and sanctity of the ancient Hindu shrine it displaced, and that as an obedient follower of Mohammed, Babar regarded the substitution of the temple by a mosque as dutiful and worthy. (see Annexure 23 : Beveridge: *Babur Nama* in English, vol II., 1922, appendix on "The inscriptions on Babur's Mosque in Ajodhya (Oudh)", p.xxvii-xxix)

15) *Archaeological Survey of India* (1934).

It identifies all the holy sites of Ayodhya with reference to the ancient texts, numbered them and put up sign posts in stone to mark the sites. The Babri mosque was identified as the Ram Janmabhoomi and a sign post was embedded there saying :"Site no. 1 : Janmabhoomi".

16) *Revised Faizabad District Gazetteer* by Smt. E.V. Joshi (1960).

This Gazetteer records that under Babar's orders the ancient Janmasthan temple was destroyed and the Babri mosque was constructed on its site. The material of the old temple including some of the original columns were employed in building the mosque. (see Annexure 24 : U.P. District Gazetteers — Faizabad, Lucknow 1960, pp. 46-47, 352-354).

17) *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* (1978, 15th edition, vol.I).

This most authentic Encyclopaedia records that Ram's birthplace is marked by a mosque erected by the Moghul emperor Babar in 1528 on the site of an earlier temple. The Encyclopaedia also provides a photograph of the present structure, describing it as the mosque on Rama's birthplace, Ayodhya, U.P., India. Earlier editions of the Encyclopaedia also contained this information. (see Annexure 25 : E.B. vol.I, p.693).

18) *Ayodhya* by Hans Bakker (1984)

In his most comprehensive study, the Dutch scholar Bakker has repeatedly and categorically accepted that an old Vaishnava temple was situated on the holy spot where Ram descended on earth. This Janmabhoomi temple was destroyed by Babar in 1528 and replaced with the now-existing mosque structure. 14 black-stone pillars from the temple were utilized by Mir Baqi in the construction of the mosque. Two more pillars have been driven upside down into the ground at the grave of the Muslim

saint Musa Ashiqan, who is said to have incited Babar to demolish the Janmabhoomi temple. A seventeenth specimen which is a door-jamb with matching sculpture and similar age (and possibly from the same temple) is kept inside the new Janmasthan temple on the neighbouring mound. Bakker concludes that Ram Janmabhoomi temple was one of the oldest Ram temples in the country which was in existence in the 12th century. (cfr. Bakker : *Ayodhya*, Egbert Forsten, Groningen 1986, part I, pp.43-59, 60-66, 119-153, part II, pp.118-121, 143-149, 173-175).

19) *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid* by Koenraad Elst (1990).

The Belgian scholar Elst has centred his study of the Ayodhya controversy on a critical examination of the anti-Mandir argumentations of mrs. Surinder Kaur (*The Secular Emperor Babar*), Syed Shahabuddin (articles in *Muslim India* and *Indian Express*), and a group of JNU historians (*The Political Abuse of History*). Confronting these argumentations with the available evidence, as well as checking them in terms of logic and methodology, he concludes that the anti-Mandir thesis is untenable. (cfr. Elst : *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid, a Case Study in Hindu-Muslim Conflict*, Voice of India, Delhi 1990).

5. Evidence from the revenue records

In the revenue records, Kot Ram Chandra, the residential headquarters of Sri Ram Chandra has been shown quite distinct from the city (*shahar*) of Ayodhya. In the records, Janmasthan, a large complex serves as a landmark in Kot Ram Chandra. The first regular settlement Report (1861) as well as the later records confirm that these records are in continuation with the Summary Settlement (1858-59) as well as with the earlier records of the Nawabi period. The revenue records clarify the factual proprietary position of Janmasthan vs. Babri Masjid, and show how the site has generally been treated as Janmasthan and nothing else.

In the first settlement report (1861), the entire complex of Janmasthan shown under abadi (populated) is covered under khasra No. 163 with 10 plots with superior ownership declared in the name of Sarkar Bahadur Nazul (government), and the mahants of Janmasthan along with their names and title to land have been shown with subordinate proprietary right (malikan-i matahit).

The map of Hadbast of the village Kot Ram Chandra appended to the Settlement Report (1861) shows only Janmasthan and the symbol of Mosque is not indicated anywhere on the plot in question.

This position is maintained even in the later three Settlements effected during the 19th-20th centuries (Fasli 1301, 1344 and 1397, corresponding to AD 1893, 1939 and 1989). In the 1937 settlement and latest Khasra Kistwar map the position is the same as in 1861 Hadbast map. As per revenue practice, numbers of the plots, sub-plots in the various categories of the revenue documents have however undergone change from one settlement to another. In the 1989-90 Settlement, the erstwhile Janmasthan complex has been shown under four khasra numbers, viz. 159, 160, 146 and 147 R. Ram Janmabhoomi, without being mentioned, has been shown in two numbers, viz. 159 and 160. Of these, most of the area has been shown in the ownership of the local mahant while some portion has been put under Nazul. The new Janmasthan monument misnomered as Janmasthan to the north of the latter, shown in khasras Nos. 146 and 147 R is vested in the ownership of the local mahant.

Eventhough the amended khasra records of the Nazul Department (1931) under No. 580 put both the structure of the Babri Masjid and the Chabootra Temple in Waqf possession, Mahant Raghunath has been declared as subsidiary proprietor of the entire plot. However, the position taken by the Nazul records (1931) is not further reflected in any of the regular revenue settlements of 1936-37 and 1989-90.

In the Settlement Reports since 1861, no plot or sub-plot has been shown as Waqf. Muhammad Asghar and Mir Rajab Ali who claimed themselves to be *khatibs* and *muazzans* of the Babri Mosque were in fact the *zamindars* of village Shahanwa, about 6 miles from Kot Ram Chandra, and held *nankar/muafi* (maintenance grant) on account of services rendered by them to the British government.

There is no record of the Babri Masjid as a Waqf in accordance with the provisions of the U.P. Muslim Waqfs Act of 1936 or its re-enacted version of 1960.(see Annexures 26, 27, A, B, C, D, E).

6. Archaeological evidence

The text in annexure, *Ram Janmabhoomi / Babri Masjid at Ayodhya : an Archaeological and Art-Historical Examination*, by dr. S.P. Gupta, is a detailed survey of those findings at the disputed site which are relevant

for the present discussion. It lists the details about the components of an earlier temple that have been re-employed in the Babri Masjid, and the results of excavations just outside the building. These excavations were carried out in 1975-80 by the Archaeological Survey of India, and led by prof. B.B. Lal. Their object of investigation was primarily the early period, presumed to have been the period of the events which formed the historical core of the Ramayana epic. Therefore, the findings relating to the medieval period have not been highlighted in the concise ASI excavation reports published so far.

Dr. S.P. Gupta, former director of the National Museum, who participated in the excavations, has written this first-hand report on the category of findings pertinent to the present discussion. His conclusions have been broadly confirmed by prof. B.B. Lal, in an article published in *Manthan* (October 1990), as well as in an interview with BBC television.

Incidentally, we have taken note of the fact that some historians of Jawaharlal Nehru University have thought it necessary to raise suspicions against the professional integrity of dr. Gupta and prof. Lal. In a statement published in *Indian Express* (December 5, 1990), they insinuate that dr. Gupta falsely claims participation in the excavations, and that prof. Lal has changed his archaeological conclusions in order to satisfy newly arisen political exigencies. Both these insinuations are baseless. The fact that the JNU historians, protagonists of the anti-Mandir camp in the present historical debate, now find it necessary to resort to personal attacks, may indicate an increasing loss of confidence in their own arguments. (see Annexure 28)

7. Untenability of the alternative hypothesis

7.1. No second Janmasthan

A thesis advanced by the anti-Mandir people is that the new Janmasthan temple (also known as *Sita ki Rasoi*) on the mound adjacent to and north of the Babri structure is itself the original Janmasthan shrine. On many grounds, this proposition is untenable :

1) This is a relatively new temple and there is no archaeological evidence to suggest that it is more than 250 years old.

2) Available historical evidence shows that this shrine was originally started by a sadhu named Ram Dasji in about 1704 AD, on a piece of land donated by Mir Masoom Ali Mafidar. Subsequently, the present impres-

sive structure was built by a Hindu minister of Safdarjang (the Shia Nawab of Awadh), Naval Rai, who rebuilt many temples during this period of relative benevolence, mostly on sites of original temples destroyed by Muslims. Where the original site was occupied, as in this case, a neighbouring site was used for the construction.

3) Tieffenthaler described the Babri Masjid in detail as being the site of the original Ram Janmabhoomi, while he also mentions the new Janmasthan temple (Sita ki Rasoi) as a very famous one in the city.

4) The thesis that the original Ram Janmabhoomi shrine continued without any interference leaves unexplained the origin of the persistent controversy about Ram Janmabhoomi on the Babri Masjid site.

7.2. Hindus never ceased claiming the site

It is well-attested that Hindus persistently tried to retrieve their holy land, which led to conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus regained control of the courtyard by the 18th century and kept up their pressure on the site under the domed structure. There is no reasonable explanation for this persistent attachment to the site, except that it was in continuation of an older, pre-Masjid tradition.

A document enclosed with a letter dated 12th August, 1855 from Wazid Ali Shah, the king of Oudh, to the British Resident Major James Outram, carrying the seal of the Qazi of Faizabad in the year 1735 A.D., mentioned that a serious riot had taken place over the Masjid "built by the emperor of Delhi" (apparently a conflict of the kind that took place in 1855) between Hindus and Muslims, during the times of Burhan-ul-Mulk Saadat Ali Khan, the first Nawab of Oudh (1707-1736) over the possession of this mosque. (NAI, Foreign, Political Proceedings, 28th December, 1855, No.355 (Enclosure No.5)).

Maratha documents show that one of the main objectives of Maratha operations and policy in North India was the liberation of the sacred cities of Ayodhya, Varanasi and Prayag. In the year 1751 Maratha armies led by Malhor rao Holkar, at the invitation of Safdarjang, the second Nawab of Oudh, defeated the Pathan forces in Doab. Immediately after his victory Malhar rao Holkar requested Safdarjang to handover Ayodhya, Kashi and Prayag to the Peshwa. (A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Oudh*)

Again, when in 1756 the third Nawab Shujauddaula invited Maratha help against impending Afghan invasion, the Maratha agent ot the Court of Oudh demanded the transfer of these three holy places including Ayodhya and the negotiations lingered on for more than a year on this one

point. Ultimately in July 1757, Shujauddaula agreed to transfer the holy cities of Ayodhya and Kashi to the Maratha leader Raghoba. But the transfer could not be implemented as Maratha armies got entangled in the conquest of the Punjab which ultimately led to the tragedy of Panipat (1761 A.D.).

(4) But Peshwa Balaji Bajirao's eagerness to acquire Ayodhya is reflected in one of his letters dated 23rd February, 1759 to Dattaji Scindia, his General in the North wherein the Peshwa reminds Scindia that "Mansur Ali's son (i.e., Shujauddaula) had promised to Dada (i.e. Raghoba) to cede Benares and Ayodhya" and instructs him to take hold to those places alongwith Prayag. (Cf. Sarkar J.N.: *Fall of the Moghul Empire*, Vol.II, Calcutta, 1934 ff 231-233).

Historians Dr A.L. Srivastava, Sir J.N. Sarkar, G.S. Sardesai and Dr. Hari Ram Gupta who have studied this period of history very deeply have concluded that "Had the Bhau (Sadashiv) emerged successful from Panipat, within a few years Kashi, Prayag and Ayodhya would have been emancipated". (Hari Ram Gupta: *Marathas and Panipat*, Chandigarh 1961, p.292).

(5) In 1767 Tieffenthaler found that in spite of the Mughal kings' efforts to prevent them, the Hindus had re-occupied the courtyard, raised the Ram Chabootra thereon, and were worshipping there as well as under the domed structure.

(6) In 1854 Thornton recorded in his Gazetteer exactly the same situation as Tieffenthaler had found.

(7) In 1855 there was a big clash in which nearly 300 Muslims under Shah Ghulam Hussain took possession of the Babri mosque and tried to fix doors on it. On protests from Hindus, clashes started. Muslims attacked Hanumangarhi, but were driven back with considerable loss. Then the Hindus counter-attacked, stormed the Janmasthan and killed 70 Muslims who were buried nearby. Shah Ghulam Hussain jumped over the wall and fled.

(8) In 1856, the Muazzin of the Babri mosque, in a petition before the British authorities admitted that the courtyard had been in possession of the Hindus for hundreds of years and now they were interfering with the domed structure as well.

(9) In 1934, serious Hindu-Muslim clashes occurred in and around the Babri mosque, occasioned by a cow slaughter. Many people were killed and the structure was seriously damaged.

In November and December 1949, the Hindus held large sessions of Ramayana-recitation around the site, in order to purify it. On December 22/23, idols were installed (some say they miraculously appeared) and the place was re-consecrated for Ram worship.

7.3. Attempts to suppress Muslim testimony

While all Muslim writers before 1949 proudly proclaimed the destruction of the Ram Janmabhoomi for construction of the mosque, hailing it as virtuous act of proclaiming the victory of Islam over Hinduism, there are definite indications that in recent years (especially since the Hindus strengthened their claim over the site) attempts have been made to suppress evidence and manipulate records. The following cases will show this.

1) *Gumgashte Halat-i Ajodhya Awadh* by Maulvi Abdul Karim (referred to in 3:8), was translated from Persian to Urdu by his grandson Maulvi Abdul Gaffar. The first edition of this translation, published in Lucknow in 1979, retained the description of demolition of the temple at Janmasthan. But this portion was removed from the second edition published in 1981 (p.53-54).

2) In 1989, a leading intellectual of this country looked for the book "*Hindustan Islami Ahad Mein*" ("Hindusthan under Islamic Rule"), by Maulana Hakim Saiyid Abdul Hai (referred to in 3:11), which included a chapter on *Hindustan ki Masjidein*, containing a description of the demolition of several temples in the country including the Ram Janmabhoomi, and their replacement by mosques. He found that many people who certainly should have known the book, were not willing to recall it. The book was also missing in the libraries of famed Muslim institutes, including AMU. If one perforce wants to consider all this mere concoction and insinuation, this much is verifiable fact: the English version (1977) has the tell-tale passages in the descriptions of seven mosques built on temples, including the Babri Masjid, censored out or substituted.

3) The manuscript of the *Muruqqa-i Khusrawi* by Sheikh Mohammed Azamat Ali Nami, was available only in the Tagore library, Lucknow, for over 100 years. In 1986, when the F.A. Ahmad Memorial Committee published it, they omitted the chapter relating to the destruction of the Ram Janmabhoomi and the Hindu-Muslim clashes in 1855. Later dr. Zaki Kakorawi had to get this published independently without getting any financial aid from the Committee.

4) The Settlement Record of 1861 (First Khasra Kishtwar Settlement Report) contained only the name of Janmasthan on all the 10 plots of Khasra no. 163. But in the copy of the report kept in the Faizabad Mahafaz Khana, someone has made interpolations to insert the names of *Jama Masjid* and *Muafi* against one of the plots. The interpolation becomes evident if one looks at the record available at Tehsil Office, the record of second Revenue Settlement 1893 AD and the Revised Khasra records of Nazul department of 1931 AD.

The fact that some people thought it necessary to conceal, manipulate or even obliterate pieces of testimony to the history and the actual use of the disputed structure and its courtyard, corroborates our view that these pieces do have proof value in favour of the Mandir hypothesis.

7.4. Total lack of counter-evidence

The thesis recently advanced by some persons that the Babri Masjid did not replace any extant Ram temple goes against common sense in many ways. The well-attested fact that the Hindus offered Ram Puja in the mosque courtyard even under Muslim rule, the rows of 11th century pillar-bases aligned with the wall of the present structure, the touch-stone pillars incorporated in it, the Hindu sculptures they carry, all these indications converge on the thesis of a pre-existent Ram temple replaced by the Babri mosque. This thesis is also in perfect conformity with historically attested behaviour patterns of Hindu devotees and Muslim conquerors. Indeed, the Ram Mandir hypothesis postulates little more than that the general patterns applied in Ayodhya too.

By contrast, the anti-Mandir thesis rests on a number of untenable assumptions :

1) The Babri Masjid was built on empty land. But the site is the highest point in central Ayodhya, the place of honour : in no city in the world would it ever have been left empty, much less in a temple city of long standing.

2) Mir Baqi went elsewhere to collect the touch-stone pillars, but at that other place where the material was readily available, he did not build a mosque (for no second mosque with such pillars is known).

3) The tradition associating the site with Rama was created out of nothing while the site was occupied by an imperial mosque. Hindus left whatever place they had earlier considered the birthplace, without a trace, and started an exclusively Hindu worship in a mosque courtyard taking the unparallelled risk of confronting the Muslim power, for no historical reason at all.

4) The British concocted the story, eventhough their knowledge of these traditions was scant, no priests or sadhus belonging to this tradition would ever believe an outsider's theory (till today they reject any scholarly chronology of Indian history), plenty of temples-turned-mosques were in existence without needing concoction, and no similar rumour-mongering by the British has been reported anywhere in India.

In an academic context, the burden of proof would rest squarely with those coming up with such a string of far-fetched hypotheses to contradict a well-established hypothesis attested by a long list of uncontroverted independent testimonies by local Muslim as well as European writers spanning 4 centuries. More so because the Mandir hypothesis is not only supported by the evidence which we have presented, but is coherent with well-attested behaviour patterns :

1) Muslim conquerors destroyed many temples and replaced them with mosques.

2) In a few cases, they left the whole building standing (Kaaba, Aya Sophia); but far more often they left the earlier building only partly standing, or razed it completely, but visibly used parts of the destroyed temple, to flaunt the victory of Islam over paganism : e.g., the Jama Masjid of Damascus (Syria), the Gyanvapi mosque (Varanasi), Jami Masjid of Rajamundri (Andhra), Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid (Delhi), Adhayi-Din-ka-Jhonpra mosque (Ajmer), Jami Masjid of Kannauj (U.P.), Jami Masjid of Sambhal (U.P.).

3) As N. Manucci (17th century) and A. Cunningham (19th century) have testified, Hindus often kept returning to places on which a mosque had been imposed, and this more so to the extent that the place itself, rather than the erstwhile temple, was sacred to them.

A simple test whether the anti-Mandir hypothesis deserves any consideration at all, is the element for which evidence should be most easy to find : the British concoction hypothesis. In the plentiful and well-kept archives which the British have left us, it should not be too difficult for genuine historians to find some piece of evidence. But so far, no proof whatsoever has been given either for such an actual course of events or even for similar British tactics at another time and place. If the anti-Mandir polemists cannot even come up with that, their whole hypothesis stands exposed as a highly implausible and purely theoretical construction.

7.5. Conclusion

The choice is between two hypotheses. Actually, the hypothesis that a Mandir stood on the Ram Janmabhoomi site until Babar's troops destroyed it and replaced it with the Babri Masjid, has only recently been made into a "hypothesis" and forced to compete with the alternative anti-Mandir hypothesis. Until recently, the pre-existence of a Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir at the Babri Masjid site was a matter of established consensus. It was confirmed by a large number of Hindu, Muslim and European sources from the 17th century onwards, and never once put in doubt. And it explains all the relevant facts and observations mentioned in all the sources, and all the iconographical and archaeological findings at the site.

By contrast, the alternative hypothesis is a recent invention of arm-chair theorizers under political compulsions. Formally, it does no more than put into question a number of the sources which confirm the Mandir hypothesis. It does not offer a coherent scenario that would explain all the available facts. It goes against general historical knowledge in a number of respects, and fails to justify its extra-ordinary assumptions. Materially, it does not come up with any proof : no proof that any of the pro-Mandir documents is telling lies, much less any proof of the events that would make up an alternative non-Mandir scenario.

The choice is between a hypothesis firmly rooted in reality, and a hypothesis constructed in the air and totally out of tune with general knowledge and particular evidence. Faced with this choice, any sincere scholar, and indeed any right-minded citizen, will not find it difficult to make up his mind.

Annexure 26

REVENUE RECORDS: **Part-1**

(i) The revenue records of the village (mauza) Ramkot, pargana haveli Awadh, District Faizabad comprising various categories, i.e., survey, bandobast (Settlement) recording the kistwar khasra, abadi, khewats, khata khataunis (jamabandi) and maps, etc., are availabele at the District Record Office (Mahafaz Khana)/Tahsil Office/Nazul Office, Faizabad right from 1861 A.D. till date (1990).

Kot Ram Chandra was one of the villages (mauzas) of suburban mahal/pargana of Awadh and as per revenue records was quite distinct

from the city (shahar) of Ayodhya. It was Kot Ram Chandra which was the residential headquarters of Sri Ram Chandra. The revenue records use the term 'Janmasthan' for a large complex (the same term is used by the 19th century Literary Sources as well),, situated in Kot Ram Chandra, of which Sita Ki Rasoi, etc., forms only a portion as a sub-plot. When co-ordinated with the Literary Sources as explained before, it becomes clear that the Janmasthan complex comprised the palace (mahal sarai) inclusive of the birthplace area of Sri Ram Chandra (Ram Janmabhoomi), temple, kitchen (Sita Ki Rasoi), etc.

(ii) The first regular Settlement Report of 1861 A.D. (vide Basta No.132 of 1861 pertaining to khasra kishtwar, mauza Ramkot, pargana Haveli and Zilla Faozabad) as well as the later reports (especially Hose's Note dated 1st April, 1905, No.37, Nazul Office, Faizabad) confirm the fact that these records are in continuation with the Summary Settlement (1858-59) as well as the past records of the Nawabi period. As such, the revenue records are extremely significant as they clarify the factual proprietary position of Janmasthan Vs. Baburi Masjid. The earliest Settlement Report of 1861 equally comprises the attestation of the entire document relating to proprietary rights and abadi, etc., by the local zamindars/pattidars/Headmen, etc., of Kot Ram Chandra as well as the revenue officials of that time.

The plots of land traditionally associated with Janmasthan complex are mostly shown as settled with abadi (populated). As a matter of fact, in the khasra kishtwar Settlement Report of 1861 A.D., the entire comples of Janmasthan is covered under khasra No.163 with 10 plots and the superior ownership of the land has been declared in the name of Sarkar Bahadur Nazul (Government).

Such is the position not only in the 1861 Settlement Report but even in the later three Settlements effected (1301 Fasli/1893 A.D.; 1344 Fasli/1936-37 A.D.; 1397 Fasli/1989-90 A.D.) during the 19th-20th centuries. However, as per procedure of revenue settlement, the khasra (kishtwar)/khewat/khata khatauni numbers often undergo a change due to alteration, branching off, adjustment and clubbing for adjustment with the neighbouring plots from one Settlement to another. As per 1397 Fasli/1989-90 Settlement, the Janmasthan complex has been shown in two parts in four khasra Nos., i.e., 159, 160, 146 and 147 R. Ram Janmabhoomi/ Baburi Masjid, withou being named have been shown in two numbers, i.e., 159 and 160. The monument today named as new Janmasthan, which earlier in the 1861 A.D. settlement had been combined with the total Janmasthan complex is shown in khasra Nos. 146 and 147 R and is vested in the ownership of the local mahant.

(iii) Most significantly, the map of the Hadbast of teh village Kot Ram Chandra as appended to the 1861 A.D. Settlement Report shows only the temple at Janmasthan in a significant manner whereas the 'Baburi Masjid' is not even indicated with the required symbol for the mosque, even though undeniably the physical structure of the monument did exist on a part of the plot of the Janmasthan. (vide Annexure 'c'). Similar is the position in the map of the Revenue village Ramkot as recorded in the 1344-45 Fasli/ 1937 A.D. (vide Annexure C-I) and the latest maps as shown in Part-II.

Annexure 27

REVENUE RECORDS: **Part-II**

An analysis of the Revenue Documents/Maps vide Annexures 'A'; 'B'; C-I, C-II; 'D'; 'E'.

Annexure 'A' is the map of the disputed site prepared by the Ayodhya Special Area Development Authority. It it headed as 'Ram Janma Bhumi Sthal' at Ayodhya. The original of it is signed by the District Magistrate, Faizabad, Chairman of the said authority and other concerned officers.

Annexure 'B' is the map of the 'Ram Katha Park' superimoposed on the Shajra plan of Ayodhya town consisting of Revenue villagles named 'Kot Ram Chander', 'Awadh Khas' and 'Jalwanpur'. Ram Janmabhoomi along with the mark of a temple is shown on plot No.160.

Annexure 'C' is the Hadbast map appended to Settlement Report (1861) vide Basta No.132 of 1861, mauza Ramkot, pargana haveli and zilla Faizabad.

Annexure 'C-I' is the latest official map of the Revenue village 'Ramkot' for the years 1344-45 Fasli corresponding to the years 1937 A.D.

Annexure 'D' is the official map of the towns of Ayodhya and Faizabad. It shows Ram Janmabhoomi but does not show any Babri Masjid.

The entire Revenue Records dating from the first Settlement (1861 A.D.)have been examined. There is no record of any of 'Babri Masjid', anywhere in the documents maintained by the Revenue Department of the Government of U.P. at the Collectorate and the Tahsil at Faizabad, that were made available during the course of long search extending to a period of over two months during 1990.

A note of caution is necessay with regard to the alleged Khasra and map maintained by the Nazul department in the Faizabad Collectorate which is relied upon by the plaintiffs of Suit No. 12 of 1961 (now O.O.S.

4 of 1989 before the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court), Sunni Central Waqf Board and others Vs. Gopal Singh Visharad and others. The map maintained by the Nazul department is not authenticated, nor prepared under any law, nor is it according to any ascertainable scale. The survey made on the basis of the khasra abadi and that map of the Nazul department at the instance of the Plaintiffs in that Suit has been rejected by the High Court's Full Bench which is trying the case and a fresh survey has been ordered on the basis of revenue records in order to ascertain the exact situation of the land involved in that Suit. It is noticeable that the plot numbers given in the plaint of that Suit are based on the said khasra abadi of the Nazul deparrtment. There is no Fard Mutabaqat comparative table between the plot numbers given in the khasra abadi of the Nazul department and the khasra abadi maintained by the Revenue Department of the Government. The work of servey has been delayed because the State of U.P. applied to the High Court that it could not make proper arrangements for the same.

The research further discloses that the place has been throughout described as 'Janmasthan' in the revenue records. The alleged grant of revenue-free land to the Shias of village Shahanwa, alleged to be descendants of Mir Abdul Baqi, is claimed to be their 'nankar', which means a personal grant for services rendered. The 'sanad' on the record also states that the grant was made for military and police and political services rendered by the grantee to the British Government.

It appears that the grant, made immediately after the first war of independence (1857) during the course of the first settlement starting from 1860 A.D., the process having been completed in 1870, must have been made by the British for the loyalty shown to them by the grantee during the first war of independence (1857).

The records maintained by the Sunni Central Waqf Board in respect of the alleged Babri Masjid, were attempted to be scrutinized but access to them was denied. However, a photostat copy of the form of registration of Waqfs relating to Waqf No.26 maintained by the Sunni Central Waqf Board (a copy thereof is Annexure 'E') was made available. It does not show any Waqf relating to the alleged Babri Masjid and even the alledged Waqf relating to the revenue-free grant of village Shahanwa is shown to be disputed by the grantee. According to all the available information including that available in the court records of the Suits pending before the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court, there is no other registration of any Waqf having the remotest connection with the alleged Babri masjid in the records of the Sunni Central Waqf Board.

Rejoinder to the AIBMAC documents

submitted to the Government of India on January 6, 1991

1. We have given evidence

The Government of India had asked both parties to this dispute to present historical evidence concerning the question whether a Hindu temple was demolished to make way for the Babri Masjid. Evidence means, human or material testimony for the scenario that a flourishing Hindu temple stood there and that it was forcibly replaced by a mosque ; or for the alternative scenario, that something else than a Hindu temple was there, such as empty space, and that the mosque was built without interfering with the existing customs of worship.

We have given evidence — solid archaeological and iconographical evidence — that a Hindu temple existed there, and a mass of documentary evidence of different types, showing the unanimous tradition, held since at least the early 17th century, that the Babri Masjid was built on a very sacred but forcibly demolished Hindu temple, believed to indicate Rama's birthplace.

But in the long list of documents submitted by the All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC), we do not find any primary evidence : testimony that the Masjid was built on an empty spot, or that the owner of the plot had willingly sold it to the Muslim rulers for construction of the Babri Masjid. We also do not find any secondary evidence in the AIBMAC bundle of documents : authentic testimony from local people or from travellers saying explicitly that they had always believed that the Masjid had been built on empty land.

Allow us to make a few general observations concerning the evidence offered by the BMAC. The very first striking fact about the documents, as already noted, is that none of them contains evidence for the point which the AIBMAC was required to present proof. In a few cases, they contain

scholarly argumentations. While not strictly evidence, we do agree that they deserve to be in this dossier. Quite a number of the documents, however, are pieces written by politically minded people with no scholarly competence in this field at all. And even among the genuine academics, there are some with a strong ideological bias: history, as well as literature cannot be equated with physics, as far as strict neutrality is concerned. It follows that even the opinion of big names cannot count as proof, unless the actual evidence on which their tall opinion is based, is added.

For instance, S.K. Chatterjee may be a big name as a linguist, but his two statements on the Ramayana are flatly untrue : that nobody believes it has a historical core (many scholars believe, for instance, that it dramatises the conquest of the South by people from the North, which amounts to a historical core), and that it was the purely individual creation of one poet, Valmiki (who in reality drew upon different earlier versions).

Big names have no proof value. They are a social, not a scientific category. So, no matter what the merits of a C. Rajagopalachari, J. Nehru, B.R. Ambedkar may have been, we cannot count them as knowledgeable on the precise historical question with which we are dealing. Had they come up with any evidence for their off-hand opinions, we could have looked into it. Unfortunately, we find nothing there but opinion.

A second observation is that all these separate pieces of "evidence" do not yield a coherent scenario at all. In fact, many of the documents contradict eachother. Thus, some ancient sources integrate the Rama story into Buddhist tradition, while some modern pamphletteers say the Ramayana symbolises the victory of Brahminism over Buddhism. Some say there is no historical core at all, others say the Ramayana dramatises the "Aryan" conquest of South India. Some say the Janmabhoomi site was empty, others that it contained a Buddhist stupa. Some say that the Masjid was built by Babar, others say it was built one or two centuries earlier. There can be only one history, one scenario that took place in reality. The AIBMAC people have not made clear for which scenario this evidence musters proof.

A third observation is that the AIBMAC evidence is quantitatively very copious, yet very meagre as far as the central issue is concerned : proving or disproving that the Babri Masjid forcibly replaced a flourishing Hindu place of worship.

There is much about the legal story, which proves little more than the obvious fact that after the Muslim take-over the place was considered Muslim property both under Nawabi and colonial rule. So, that part of the

"evidence" simply restates the judicial problem, but does not clinch the issue of its historical rights and wrongs. But then again, it also proves that Hindus kept on claiming the place, both in court and on the ground. The point is precisely that it was unjustly in Muslim possession, and that Hindus kept on fighting for what was theirs but was denied them by the Muslim and British rulers.

But there is in these documents only little about the events in Ayodhya in the Moghul and Nawabi periods. And what is conspicuously missing, is any kind of testimony that Babar or another Muslim commander saw this empty piece of land and, out of an abhorrence of emptiness, ordered a Masjid to be built. That would have been evidence for an alternative to the Mandir scenario.

In the AIBMAC documents pertaining to ancient history, especially to the period when Ram supposedly lived, we see the same failure. There is not one contemporary or near-contemporary testimony of Valmiki inventing the character Ram out of nothing. There is not one line from any of the many Ramayana versions, that declares the Rama character was merely invented to build a good story around. That would be something of a proof that Ram was purely fiction. Failing that, it becomes quite hard to prove that someone did not exist. We have offered proof that Ram was at least considered and treated as a historical character by ancient Hindu writers, including Purana writers whose dynastic histories have been at least partly confirmed by modern historical research, even while this was not the question for which evidence was requested. But our AIBMAC friends, even while trying to smuggle Rama's historicity into the debate, do not come up with any evidence, merely some latter-day opinions.

We reiterate that for us, the historical details of the events that became the subject matter of the Ramayana are not what is at stake in this debate. The point is *whether* it is a traditional Hindu sacred place, not *why* it is one. Therefore, all documents pertaining to other aspects of the matter than the existence of a temple which was forcibly replaced by the Babri Masjid, are really beside the point.

Nevertheless, we have given our comment on all the AIBMAC categories of historical documents, in the one-by-one rebuttal. With the judicial documents, we have dealt more briefly, i.e. only in so far as they pertain to the historical debate.

2. Brief rebuttal to the AIBMAC documents

A.1) C. Rajagopalachari gives no evidence whatsoever. He quotes Gandhiji as saying that the episodes of the Ramayana are "stories". So what ? You can buy books called "The tragic *Story* of Partition" : they are just as much about history. If they also have a moral, you can tell them to your children, and then they become "stories". If we are not misled by the word "story", we can read on and notice that C. Rajagopalachari made a distinction between Rama as "avatar" and Rama as "king of the Ikshvaku race", i.e. between the mythological and the historical Rama.

The fact that Rajagopalachari makes the Rama scenario into a children's story, proves the non-historicity of Rama only if one is willing to conclude that real events and characters cease to be historical the moment their "story" is made into a Bombay film.

A.2.a) Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy gives no evidence whatsoever. He lambasts Rama as a mean character and representative of the "Aryan race" — a wholly unscientific category thoroughly discredited by the use Hitler made of it. In fact, even on that spurious count, Ramaswamy is mistaken : Rama, like Krishna, is classically described as dark-coloured, like the purest specimens of Ramaswamy's Dravidian race. But the point for this discussion is that Ramaswamy doesn't even deny the essential historicity of the Ramayana. He only denies its sacredness, and asserts that its real hero was Ravana. The purely propagandistic, unscientific and contradictory character of Ramaswamy's approach to the Ramayana, can be seen from the fact that on the one hand, he often called the Brahmins the guardians of the oppression of the Dravidians by the Aryans, and on the other, he calls the Brahmin Ravana the Dravidian hero who fights the ugly Aryan invader, the non-Brahmin Rama.

A.2.b) Jawaharlal Nehru gives no evidence whatsoever. He merely notices that parodies of the Ramayana are staged by Dravidian separatists who propagate variations on the Aryan race theory. This propaganda of course assumes that the successful fight of the Northern king Rama against the Southern king Ravana in fact dramatises a historical event of conquest of the South by the North. While not a proof of the Ramayana's historicity, it is at least proof of contemporary people's conviction that it has a historical core. Nehru says in so many words: "The Ramayana and the Mahabharata deal with the days of the Indo-Aryans, their conquests and civil wars."

Further on, he says he didn't consider the Rama episodes as factually true (When ? As a child ?), but in a next quote he explodes this hypothesis by saying that the Ramayana is the story of "the Aryan expansion in the South", which he doesn't conceive as a myth but as history. So, he says the Ramayana is dramatised history.

A.3) Dr. Sukumar Sen gives no evidence whatsoever. But at least, here we meet the first scholar among the authorities invoked to substantiate the AIBMAC case.

From what dr. Sen writes, we learn that Valmiki was a historical character and that in his time, the Rama story already existed. However, no testimony of Rama or the other Ramayana characters is available in the Vedas (though Sita appears as an earth goddess). But Rama shows up occasionally in other writings, including the Mahabharata. And there were many Rama traditions, variations on the Rama theme, upon which Valmiki drew to compose his most classical version of the story. In spite of the current efforts to pit Buddhism against Rama, there are Buddhist versions of the Rama "legend", and Buddhist sources relate with pride that Buddha was of the same Ikshvaku lineage as Rama.

Dr. Sen notes that Sita appears in the Vedas as an earth goddess. But all he really knows, is that the *name* Sita appears there. It is perfectly possible that the worship of Sita together with Rama is not a continuation of any Vedic Sita worship, but concerns a later human being who was called Sita just like anyone can be called after a god or goddess, and who became the wife of the historical character Rama. From the fact that old texts mention a god Shiva, we also do not infer that therefore Shivaji cannot have been a historical character.

The fact that there are many versions of the Ramayana, is no evidence against its historicity at all. Try the experiment of telling one story to several people and letting them renarrate it to others: after a few steps in this transmission process, substantial differences will have crept in. Consider also the plural versions of stories in scriptures of other cultures. For instance, in the Bible, there are two different Creation stories ; two wholly different genealogies of Jesus are given ; in fact, every single story from Jesus' life is related differently by the different Gospel-writers, a mere thirty to sixty years after Jesus' death. And yet, no serious scholar concludes therefrom that Jesus did not exist.

A.4) P.S. Sridhara Murthy doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. His text is full of crank statements and crackpot theories, all built on top of the Hitlerian theory of the Aryan race. Thus, he calls Shiva "the only non-Aryan original Indian god" : may we remind him that Shiva was depicted as white, like the "Aryans", while the Vishnu incarnations Krishna and Rama are depicted as dark, like the "non-Aryans"?

His crank tendencies develop into a full-fledged conspiracy theory (of course pure conjecture without any proof) where he combines his visceral hatred for the Brahmin Aryan "race" with the inconvenient fact that central characters in the Rama tradition (Rama, Valmiki, Vishvamitra) were non-Brahmins, and that the bad guy, Ravana, was a Brahmin : the Brahmins "were desperately looking for an epic hero who could attract the non-Brahmin common folk and show how the Vedic tradition can condescend to honour and worship one practising certain ideals. The image, character and personality of Rama just fulfilled this need. Rama was manufactured to fill the vacuum. Valmiki, Rama and Vishvamitra had to be, therefore, non-Brahmins... They also had to notify the common folk that in the Vedic religion even Brahmins and scholars when found guilty would not be spared and would be branded as villains and demons. So Ravana had to be depicted as a Brahmin and a scholar."

This is quite a mad line of reasoning. It says that, if Brahmins depict others in a scornful way, it proves they consider them inferior ; and if they don't, but make them into heroes (even assuming that it is "they" who created the Ramayana), it proves the same thing, only it now involves a ploy to hide this scorn from the people who are its objects. This tendency, quite persistent in mr. Murthy's text, to explain any course of events in such a way as to prove invariably the same thing, is called paranoia.

More of this Brahmin conspiracy theory is the contention that the episode of Rama's abandoning Sita "was designed by the Vedic religion to hint the people that Buddha's conduct was, after all, wrong". The "hint" is based on the fact that Buddha too left his wife. He writes this four sentences after stating that "Rama's conduct was in direct contrast with that of Buddha".

Mr. Murthy also makes a lot of the now-abandoned 19th century theory that Ravana was a Buddhist, and quotes with approval the wholly unsubstantiated statement that "Rama legend represents the victory of Hinduism over Buddhism". While we don't subscribe to this interpretation, we do notice that the Ramayana is once more presented as an embellished version of an actual historical process.

In the racist anti-Aryan theory of both Ramaswamy Naicker and Sridhara Murthy, one need not look for consistency. Since all possible facts prove the same thing, there is no need for them to co-ordinate facts. For instance, even while inferring, from the fact that Rama was a warrior, that he must have been hostile to the Buddhists and Jains because of their absolute "non-violence", mr. Murthy makes much of a Jain king who "repulsed" Mahmud Ghaznavi's nephew who came on conquest.

He says that Jains ruled Ayodhya well into the 12th century AD, and lists 10 Jain temples existing in 1330. None of these was claimed to be where we say the Janmabhoomi is, so we have no quarrel with that. In fact, some of these Jain temples have also been destroyed by Muslim conquerors, and add proof to our well-founded proposition that Muslim conquerors have massively destroyed temples of all Pagan sects, including Jainism and Buddhism.

In his booklet, published in 1988, which seems to be little more than a rehashing of mrs. Surinder Kaur's *The Secular Emperor Babar*, published in 1977, mr. Murthy quotes some more big names.

A.4.a) S.K. Chatterjee gives no evidence whatsoever. He gives the opinion that "there is evidently no historical core below the surface, no scholar of Indian history now thinks that Rama, the hero of Ramayana, was a historical person who can be relegated to a particular period of time". This opinion is already amply disproven by all the people, including scholars, who have said that the Ramayana is a dramatisation of the "Aryan conquest of South India", which amounts to a basis in history. So, his statement is flatly untrue. Equally untrue is the statement that the Ramayana is "a literary creation by some single poet who has been named Valmiki": there were many poetic creations built around the Rama story available in different parts of India, by the time Valmiki composed his classical version.

So, S.K. Chatterjee may have been an authority on some things, but on the Ramayana he was not above making flatly untrue statements.

The contention that the Rama story cycle was invented out of thin air, goes against all we know of ancient culture. The same mistake was made about Homer's *Ilias*, the story of the conquest of Troy by the Greeks. The official teaching was that it was fiction, until Schliemann started digging and found Troy. Generally, all the ancient epics are embellished and dramatised amplifications or modifications of a true story.

A.4.b) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gives no evidence whatsoever. He gives the opinion that the Ramayana "in its second edition, from a purely historical work, also became a didactic work aiming to teach a right code... [In the third edition, it was], like the Mahabharata, made into a repository of legends, knowledge, philosophy..." What Ambedkar says, is quite the opposite from what S.K. Chatterjee says : the Ramayana most certainly grew around a historical core.

A.4.c) Dr. Jyoti Prasad Jain gives no evidence whatsoever. He wants to claim all the temples of Ayodhya for the Jains. Mr. Murthy and the AIBMAC infer from that that he may be a good ally against the Hindus. Unfortunately for them, dr. Jain shares our view that Babar and other Muslim rulers destroyed many Hindu (including Jain) temples. He restates the well-known fact that Babar mutilated Jain idols. Mr. Murthy promises to disprove this well-known fact "in the following pages", but in the following 29 pages, he doesn't return to this subject at all.

A.4.d) The Gazetteers do not give any evidence whatsoever, according to mr. Murthy. Yet, some of the Court petitions filed by Ayodhya Muslims base themselves on the 1905 Gazetteer by Neville, which is here dismissed as written by someone who has "neither studied history nor archaeological reports". His only argument is that the report does not tally with the 1960 Gazetteer. And this is where it does not tally : the 1905 Gazetteer says that Babar stayed in Ayodhya for "a week", while the 1960 Gazetteer says he stayed there for "a few days" (this last version is explicitly taken from mrs. Beveridge's translation, which was published years after Nevill's Gazetteer). It certainly proves that Nevill was a non-historian : he does not even correct his figures in the light of a Gazetteer published 55 years later !

If our AIBMAC friends want to wage this debate on the strength of the confabulations of crackpots like mr. Sridhara Murthy, we could have given them plenty.

In fact, in spite of the scorn mr. Murthy heaps on them, the Gazetteers do prove that the British surveyors, who were generally non-partisan and conscientious people, saw no reason to doubt the veracity of the local tradition that the Babri Masjid had been built on a demolished Hindu temple. All the relevant British Gazetteers state that Babar or his subordinate demolished a temple to replace it with the Babri Masjid.

A.4.e) The pillars in the Babri structure, and their iconography, give no evidence whatsoever — at least not in favour of the anti-Mandir hypothesis. For a detailed rebuttal of mr. Murthy's statements (based on the findings of a "research team" led by Sher Singh) on pp.31-35 and pp.41-43, we refer to our own evidence, notably annexure 28. Briefly : mr. Murthy is wholly mistaken in stating that the same stone has been used in other masjids (*Kasauti* is but a popular and imprecise name, the stone used here is *schistose*), and that the sculptures are Buddhist. His sources are wholly outdated since the archaeological work of A.K. Narain and B.B. Lal.

A.5) Dr. R.L. Shukla gives no evidence whatsoever. His text starts with a political tirade. Then, he heaps scorn on a number of archaeologists and historians, calling them "fanatic", "notorious", "nonsense", "opposed to social change" etc., all kinds of personal attacks which are totally irrelevant to the discussion. Short, this man has no scientific temper, and his pamphlet does not belong in a compilation of scientific evidence. Then, without naming his source, he extensively restates some of the research results of the excavation campaigns led by prof. A.K. Narain and by prof. B.B. Lal. It is well-known by now that the latter has publicly stated that the Babri Masjid has replaced a pre-existing building, quite possibly a temple, and does claim that the Ramayana has a historical core (as in his article in *Manthan*, October 1990). So, all the archaeological findings, including the as yet unpublished ones, do not at all add up to evidence that no Mandir was there, on the contrary.

A.6) The Jataka story gives no evidence whatsoever. It was apparently included because it locates the dynasty of Dasharath and Rama in Benares rather than Ayodhya. Of course, in a cultural tradition not guarded by a central authority, variations occur, and these may include the localisation of the main events. But there is no living tradition anytime in the past millennium that locates Rama in Benares. We base our claim on the Ram Janmabhoomi site not on some long-forgotten isolated statement dug up from ancient manuscripts, but on a well-established living tradition.

A.7) V. Raghavan and C. Godakumbura give no evidence whatsoever. They give some more variations on the Rama story, proving once more that the Ramayana was not "a literary creation by some single poet who has been named Valmiki", as S.K. Chatterjee claimed. The book, especially

the parts omitted in the AIBMAC compilation, but mentioned in the table of contents, also describes how Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia venerate Rama and narrate and enact his story (in spite of restrictions recently imposed by Malaysia's Islamic government).

The version which is given, "is not wide-spread" and even now "only known to traditional performers". The writer "obtained it from a dancer" in one particular village. If such a lone tradition in the backwoods of Sri Lanka must count as clinching evidence on the Ayodhya issue, then the numerous local testimonies should count even more as evidence, right ? The cited text incidentally also says that "some of it may have a historical basis".

A.8) Malladi Venkata Ratnam doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. What he does give is a crank theory: that Ayodhya is really the Greek word Agadon, that Rama ruled in Egypt, and more such totally unsubstantiated flights of the imagination. Look, if we had wanted, we could have included some Hindu crank theories as well: that Rome really is Ram-nagar, that the Taj Mahal was built by Hanuman, that Menes the first pharoah is merely our Manu, and what not. But we decided to give some genuine scientific evidence. And we did not expect to find some of the unfortunate deadwood of Hindu scholarship in our opponents' "evidence".

A.9) Sushil Srivastava doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. He creates a wholly artificial problem by reading the Ayodhya Mahatmya directions for the location of the Janmasthan as if they were written for (and by) people who use a compas rather than orient themselves roughly by solar directions. In one paragraph, mr. Srivastava has to use the word "exactly" (North, West, etc., with zero degree aberration) seven times, in order to arrange for the Mahatmya directions not to lead us "exactly" to the Babri Masjid site. And with all that hair-splitting, he only manages to move the "exact" location of the indicated Janmasthan two dozen yards, so that "Kaushalya Bhavan is nearer the Janmabhoomi than the Babri Masjid is". Methodologically, we can only notice that he *distorts* the text by acting as if it says "exactly North" etc., in a modern sense of the term "exact".

Further on, mr. Srivastava himself declares that it is but logical that Muslim officers chose "the central spot" as "the best location" for erecting their place of worship : does he not realise that the many Hindus, Jains and Buddhists there must have had the same idea during the preceding centuries ?

It may be of interest that in a part of his book which was not included in the AIBMAC evidence, mr. Srivastava floats the theory that the Masjid was not built by Babar, but sometime in the 14th century. The theory that the Masjid was not built by Babar, seems to be implicitly assumed also in documents A.4 and A.11. Since the enemies of Hinduism will use absolutely anything to sow doubts, we may as well reply to that theory.

We may point out simply that this theory makes absolutely no difference to our case. The Hindu attachment to the site is in no way dependent on who destroyed the temple and built the "Babri" Masjid. Looters may quarrel over the booty, but for the victim the damage has been done all the same. Those testimonies (among the ones we have presented in support of the local consensus that the Masjid had been built on a Hindu sacred place to which the Hindus kept returning) which include the belief that Babar built the Masjid, are not rendered unreliable, since this belief can be explained perfectly from the inscriptions on the Masjid which claim the honour for Babar.

If anything, this theory would deprive the already discredited "argument from silence" about the temple demolition in Babar's diary from its last bit of force. The argument that Babar was a "secular emperor", would also lose its relevance. If we look at the record of the preceding Muslim dynasties in temple-destruction, the destruction of a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya would only be true to type.

We may at once put to rest the fable, with which mr. Sushil Srivastava sympathises (as well as the writers of A.4 and A.11) that Babar was a secularist (unless a "secularist" is defined as "someone who has utter contempt for Hinduism", as seems appropriate these days). In his diary, he himself writes that his attack on Chanderi was a *Jihad* to convert a *Dar-ul-Harb* ("land of strife") into a *Dar-ul-Islam*. On the eve of his *Jihad* against Rana Sanga, he vowed to give up drinking and had the cups and vessels destroyed :"These vessels were broken into pieces in the manner in which, if Allah wills, the idols of the Pagans will be smashed." He also comments on his victory against the Rajput confederacy in 1527, and after quoting copiously from the Quran, he writes :"After this success, *ghazi* (slayer of infidels) was written amongst the royal titles. Below the titles entered on the Fath-Nama, I wrote the following quatrain :

"For Islam's sake, I wandered in the wild,
prepared for war with Pagans and Hindus,
resolved myself to meet the martyr's death.
Thanks be to Allah ! A *ghazi* I became."

If this Babar was a secularist, can the present-day Babri advocates be communalists ?

A.10) Arvind N. Das gives no evidence whatsoever. He does, however, repeat the trick of the JNU historians (see document A.16) in their famous statement, of quoting the convenient part of B.B. Lal's findings (that Ayodhya was not inhabited before the 7th century BC) but concealing his other finding, that there must have been an 11th-century building right where the Babri structure stands. Mr. Das quotes mr. Srivastava (see document A.9) without any criticism. After deliberately concealing the findings at the site, he suddenly goes on to assume that a building was there, and to postulate that it cannot have been a Hindu temple. And then he opines that the stone pillars and old reports suggest that there was "a Buddhist stupa" here. Of course, the Chinese travellers whom he mentions, have never located a stupa at that site, they have merely described a strong Buddhist presence in Ayodhya. And of course, if mr. Das had not been 100% illiterate on Indian culture, he would have known that a Stupa is a solid structure, not a pillared one.

And then he brings up the big lie of a centuries-long vast struggle between Brahmins and Buddhists, systematically spread by Hindu-baiters: "The possiblity of the destruction of this site by Brahmanical onslaught, which desecrated even the Mahabodhi temple at Gaya, cannot be discounted". Of course, the Mahabodhi temple was never destroyed by Hindus. It was abandoned when the Buddhists, who had continued to live and work in Hindu India for many centuries, were exterminated by the Muslim invaders, especially Bakhtiar Khalji who destroyed the Buddhist universities, levelling both the buildings and their inmates. This was exactly what the Muslim invaders had done in Central Asia. They didn't fabricate an opposition between Hindus and Buddhists, as our secularists have been doing : for them, these were both Kafirs. They killed Brahmins as they killed Buddhist monks, they broke Buddha statues as they broke Shiva idols, they levelled Buddhist temples as they levelled Vaishnava temples, and they wrote it down with equal glee and pride, so that we at present have all the evidence, and nobody can deny it.

The same thing counts for Jain establishments : Pagan institutions of every sect have suffered under the Islamic onslaught. Famous Buddhist and Jain institutes that have been destroyed by the Muslims without leaving a trace, used to flourish at the following places : Bukhara (from *bihara*, *vihara*, i.e. Buddhist monastery), Samarkand, Khotan, Balkh,

Bamian, Begram, Jalalabad, Peshawar, Takshashila, Mirpur-Khas, Nagar-Parkar, Sringar, Sialkot, Agroha, Mathura, Hastinapura, Kanauj, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Sarnath, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Vaishali, Rajgir, Odantpuri, Bharhut, Paharpur, Jagaddala, Jajnagar, Nagarjunikonda, Amaravati, Kanchi, Dwarasamudra, Bharuch, Valabhi, Palitana, Girnar, Patan, Jalor, Chandrawati, Bhinmal, Didwana, Nagaur, Osian, Bairat, Gwalior and Mandu. Smaller establishments add up to several hundreds.

As for the Bodh Gaya temple, mr. Das should know that, after centuries of disuse, it was taken over by a Hindu priest in the late 19th century, when a project of the Burmese king to renew it fell through because of the Burmese war. Is that what he means by "desecrated"? In spite of British attemps to keep the Buddhists (identified with Japanese expansionism) out, and in spite of small-human individual interests coming in the way, the temple was peacefully restored as Buddhism's foremost shrine in the world. Since 1953, the temple is managed by a mixed Hindu-Buddhist management committee, constituted under the Bihar Bodh Gaya Temple Act, passed in 1949 on the basis of earlier agreements worked out between the Mahabodhi Society and the Hindu Mahasabha.

While Hindu society was never guilty of finishing the Buddhist presence at this sacred place, and could have invoked the British rulers' assent to the non-Buddhist control of the place (as our AIBMAC friends invoke the British assent to the status-quo in citing the 1886 court ruling), we didn't mind restoring it to the Buddhist community, not so much because they belong to the same *sanatana* tradition as we, but because we are sensitive to their veneration for that place. We do not claim this sensitivity as merit, it comes naturally to all human beings. It is only a mistaken commitment to fanatical dogmas that is disturbing the AIBMAC people's sensitivity in the case of our own three shrines.

A.11) The unnamed authors of the chapter *"Birthplace of epic hero"* (among them, apparently, is Sher Singh, the chief authority for Sridhara Murthy's opinions, see A.4), give no evidence whatsoever. But it is nice of them to quote H.R. Neville, who notes that "it is locally affirmed that... the Janmasthan was in Ramkot and marked the birthplace of Rama. In 1528 AD Babar... destroyed the ancient temple and on its site built a mosque." In fact, that is what we have been saying all the time. Why aren't the Babri polemists coming up with a document stating that "Babar saw this empty land and on its site built a mosque"? That would be evidence. But this here

is secondary evidence for our own viewpoint, that the Babri Masjid was built on a forcibly destroyed temple.

The AIBMAC has underlined the statement that "no record of the visit to Ayodhya is to be found in the Musalman historians". If this means that they consider this statement vindicated by the authority of mr. Neville, from whom it is quoted, we want to draw attention to the fact that mr. Neville nonetheless sticks to the opinion that Babar did visit Ayodhya, which "must have occurred about the time of his expedition to Bihar". Mr. Neville was one of those competent scholars who are aware that an "argument from silence" is the weakest kind of argument. He took care not to be deceived by it, especially because he had other, positive evidence to take into account : the inscriptions on the Masjid that mention Babar as its patron.

As we notice with agreement, these authors are convinced that Mahmud Ghaznavi destroyed absolutely every temple that he came across, for they demand from mrs. Beveridge an explanation on "how the three important Hindu temples could survive the attack of Mahmud Ghaznavi".

These authors are quite incompetent as historians, for they simply can't read their own evidence, and keep on drawing wrong conclusions. They say mr. Neville had "grave doubts about [the Ramayana's] historicity", which is a very non-neutral attitude, when in fact mr. Neville had written quite neutrally, without any uncommon gravity :"It is not yet possible to say whether any of this story is really historical". The research on ancient history was outside the scope of mr. Neville's job as Gazetteer-writer.

They falsely accuse mrs. Beveridge of hiding mr. Neville's opinion from the reader. She does indeed not give every other author's opinion, which is quite legitimate if you prefer facts to opinions. An example :"She also wants to keep the readers in the dark about another statement made by Neville regarding the construction of this mosque." This is the statement which she conceals: "In 1528 Babar built the mosque at Ayodhya on the traditional spot where Rama was born." Of course, mrs. Beveridge herself has not said anything else.

Or has she ? This, according to the pro-Babri writers, is the difference: "There is no mention of destroying any ancient temple [in Neville]", while mrs. Beveridge had said that Babar had destroyed a temple which marked Ram's birthplace. Well, two pages earlier, they themselves have quoted Neville stating that Babar "destroyed the ancient temple and on its site built a mosque". So, mr. Neville needed two sentences to say that Babar

destroyed a temple and that it was considered Ram's birthplace, while mrs. Beveridge says it in one sentence. That is then with a lot of grimness presented as distortion.

If we leave out Ramaswamy Naicker, then this is already the third outright crank document which the AIBMAC offers as "evidence". We think this is, in effect, a tactic to make us waste our energy on stupid non-evidence, and to distract the eventual reader's attention from the real evidence, which we have given, and from the AIBMAC's own utter lack of any genuine evidence.

A.12) Rajesh Kochhar doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. He makes a large number of assumptions, in fact many more than he can explicitate. If his contention that Ayodhya lay in Afghanistan is true, all the work done so far about the "archaeology of the Ramayana sites", has to be re-done. But the interesting point is that this writer does not give the slightest trace of an argument for his case. All he says is that the "Aryans" must have lived in Afghanistan in the time allotted by the Puranas to Rama, about 1900 BC, and that sites have been excavated there. This says absolutely nothing about any Ram indications (even while tacitly assuming that the Ramayana does have a historical core).

Moreover, he is not up-to-date concerning the "Aryan" theory and the Indus civilisation. Thus, he still says that the Indus people did not know the horse, that typically Aryan animal. This is not true: remains of horses have meanwhile been found at two sites. The entire Aryan Invasions theory is now being questioned internationally, though we have no illusions that Hindu-baiters will soon stop exploiting this theory, for which a lot of opinion but not a single piece of proof has ever been mustered.

He himself does not give a single reference to any proof for this theory, but because of his attachment to the Aryan Invasions dogma, he does overrule available literary evidence that conflicts with it: "Archaeological evidence does not prove that Puranic history is bunk. It does, however, prove that its geography is all wrong. Obviously, the Ayodhya of today cannot be the same as the Ayodhya of ancient times." How so, *obviously*? You can only say that its geography is all wrong, if you know what the right geography was. But the "right geography" at present only means that which conforms to the still-prevailing paradigm, the Aryan Invasions theory. There is absolutely nothing in this document that substantiates an alternative geography, from which the Puranic geography could then be shown up as wrong.

According to the findings of the excavation campaign "Archaeology of the Ramayana sites", Valmiki's description of Rama's exile journey does fit the archaeological findings at five sites, and if not Rama's, then at least Valmiki's Ayodhya must be today's Ayodhya (about the historicity of the Ramayana and its localisation, see prof. B.B. Lal's article in *Manthan*, October 1990). And in Valmiki's time, we know for fact that at least Buddhists and Jains stayed in Ayodhya (among other things, coins with Jain imagery of the 3rd century BC have been found, i.e. roughly contemporary with Valmiki). There is no reason to believe that they would, after that, have lost track of their sacred city (where five of the Jain Tirthankaras were born). So, these are already two indications that there is a continuity from Valmiki's Ayodhya to today's Ayodhya.

With that, mr. Kochhar's claim becomes in effect that Valmiki situated Rama in an area he himself knew, the present Ayodhya, without therefore pretending it was the historical location of the events around which he wrote his Ramayana. That is not logically impossible. But then that is the only thing that can be said in favour of his theory. There is not even a single hint at any kind of evidence for his suggestion that Rama lived in Afghanistan.

A.13) Chidananda Dasgupta doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. He does a lot of abusing and accusing, and totally glosses over the real issue in this context : the historical fact that the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was forcibly replaced with a mosque, not as an isolated incident, but as the local application of a thousandfold practice which was kept up throughout the area of Muslim conquest. The part which the AIBMAC has underlined is merely an abuse against "the" Brahmins ; but the sentence goes on to bracket them with the Ulema, who are said to have an equal disregard for competent historical opinion. At any rate, somebody who fills a page with curses against people who disregard historical evidence, should have come up with some evidence himself, instead of taking a position that is thoroughly discredited by the authentic evidence which we have offered.

Since much of mr. Dasgupta's tirade is directed against us, we want to state clearly that it is not we who "demand that history books should be burnt". It is those who want to rewrite and "decommunalise" history, and to whitewash the awful record of the Islamic conquerors and rulers, who make efforts to conceal authentic Muslim history-writing, which details with what horrible fervour and for what pious motives thousands of temples were destroyed, and millions of Kafirs slaughtered.

In our bundle of evidence, we have mentioned that some of the Muslim testimonies for the Ram Mandir tradition have narrowly escaped oblivion, since attempts were made to conceal or destroy them. Some of the maps in the revenue records have been tampered with. The "eminent JNU historians", oft-quoted champions of the Babri cause, have been caught in the act of manipulating evidence (see articles by prof. A.R. Khan in IE, 25/2 and 1/4/90, and appended to this text). It is not those who have firm evidence, who need to resort to such dirty tricks or to "burning the history books".

A.14) Prof. R.S. Sharma doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. In his interview with Pranava K. Chaudhary, he calls the Ram temple "fictitious". This is unscientific of him, because it leaves unexplained the solid tradition of testimonies to the contrary, as well as the archaeological evidence.

The *Times of India* has gone around collecting anti-Mandir statements from "authorities", as if we are still in the Middle Ages, when quoting an authority counted as proof. All these big names still have to come up with the first piece of proof for the hypothesis that the Babri Masjid was built on an empty spot, that the Hindus under Muslim rule went there for worship for no reason at all, that all the Muslim and foreign testimonies were untruthful, and that the local tradition for the pre-existence of a Ram Mandir was somehow concocted.

Prof. R.S. Sharma states that "in 1891, A. Fuhrer uncritically adopts some motivated local tradition that the three Ayodhya temples including the one at Rama's birthplace were destroyed by Muslims. But there is absolutely no basis for such sweeping statements." This "motivated" local tradition had been noted already in 1858 by Balfour. About the Janmabhoomi, it had been noted by local Muslims in 1735 and even earlier by Aurangzeb's granddaughter.

We could of course make inferences and postulate a wilful ignorance on the professor's part. But we don't like personal allegations, so let us rather put it this way : if even a renowned professor who has just recently published a book on "Rama's Ayodhya and Communal History" can be ignorant of *all* the plentiful documentary evidence ("*absolutely* no basis", he says), how can we be expected to take seriously all the amateurs whom our AIBMAC friends have brought together to provide "evidence" ?

A.15) Sher Singh doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. But at least he makes a try. He claims that "the whole mischief was started by P. Carnegy in 1870. He alleged that the columns used by the Muslims in the construction of the Babri mosque belong to the Janmasthan temple". In reality, that much had already been said in 1767 by Father Tieffenthaler. And it has very recently been proven by dr. S.P. Gupta, with the most modern methods for the use of which mr. Sher Singh makes an appeal.

Sher Singh is the chief expert on which Sridhara Murthy bases his remarks on the archaeological part of his crank tirades. This is already his third appearance in this list of documents (the AIBMAC sources are not so numerous as they had seemed, after all). He wants the JNU historians to make a C14 testing of a beam in the Babri structure, which the 1960 Gazetteer considers as made of Sandalwood, and taken from the earlier Ram Mandir. In fact, this wooden beam was put in during the repairs carried out on orders of the British government, after the 1934 riots. A C14 dating could only confirm that. After having led a research team working on this controversy, Sher Singh should have known these things.

A.16) The 25 JNU historians don't give any proof whatsoever. All they can do, is try to cast aspersions on the arguments which Hindus have been giving. A coherent alternative hypothesis which takes into account all the known facts, is not available in the JNU historians' oft-quoted statement. Their statement has been taken care of by prof. A.R. Khan (articles in *Indian Express*, 25/2 and 1/4/90, appended to this text) and by the Belgian scholar Koenraad Elst (*Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babri Masjid*). Nevertheless, even after prof. Khan exposed this document as "elusive in character", criticised its methodology, and drew attention to "not only concealment of evidence but also distortion of evidence", the entire pseudo-secularist intelligentsia has continued to quote "the eminent JNU historians" as the final word on this issue.

The AIBMAC should have shown in what way this document substantiates their case, then we could give a precise reply to that deduction. So far, we can only say that this statement beats around the bush flamboyantly.

It talks a lot about there being no proof for Rama's existence, his time and place of birth, his elevation to divine status etc.: all these things do not concern us here, we have been asked by the Government for evidence of the medieval Ram Mandir and its destruction by Muslim invaders who built the Babri Masjid on top of it, and we have given that evidence. We

repeat that we do not have to justify why we consider a place sacred, we expect our sacred places to be respected as much as members of other religions would do.

The JNU document also philosophises about how there existed inter-communal amity as well as intra-communal strife. Very well, people are people and cannot be reduced to their religious denominations. Therefore, many common Muslims don't observe the Quranic injunctions against friendship with Kafirs (Quran 3:28, 3:118, 5:51, 5:144, 9:7, 9:28, 58:23, 60:4). Some Muslim rulers also preferred a stable kingdom with communal amity to their Islamic duty of persecuting the Kafirs (though they were severely criticised for this Islamic laxity by the guardians of orthodoxy, e.g. Akbar by Ahmad Sirhindi, who had a wealth of verses at their disposal for proving the Muslim's duty to fight the Kafirs : Quran 2:191, 2:193, 4:66, 4:84, 5:33, 8:12, 8:15-18, 8:39, 8:59-60, 8:65, 9:2-3, 9:5, 9:14, 9:29, 9:39, 9:73, 9:111, 9:123, 25:52, 37:22-23, 47:4-5, 48:29, 69:30-37).

In particular, the Nawabs, who belonged to the Shia sect, which shortly before had been persecuted by Aurangzeb, were not too zealous in their observance of Quranic rules regarding the Kafirs. That is why they allowed the Hindus to worship in the Masjid courtyard, understanding that the Hindus were very attached to this sacred place. But all that peaceful co-existence between Shias and Hindus does not add up to proof that the Babri Masjid was built on empty land.

About the three instances of Nawabi officials giving grants to Hindu institutions, cited in the JNU pamphlet as evidence of the Nawabs' secularism, prof. A.R. Khan (History Dpt., Himachal University, Shimla) has remarked: "It may be noted that in the first two evidences the authors have deliberately concealed the fact that both the *diwans* were Hindus. [By contrast], while mentioning about the gifts by the officials of the Nawabi court to Hindu priests (in their third evidence), they have not forgotten to state that the officials were Muslims. This not only amounts to concealment of evidence but also distortion of evidence." (IE 25/2/90)

The JNU text does not go into the archaeological evidence, in fact it denies that there is any for the relevant period: "So far no historical evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had earlier been occupied by a temple." As mr. I. Mahadevan has pointed out (IE 6/12/90), the JNU historians have selected from the ASI report what suited them, the absence of any remains of habitation from before the 7th century BC, and left out the finding that there was again a building on the disputed spot from the 11th century AD onwards.

It is true that the first brief ASI report on the excavation led by prof. B.B. Lal does not mention the pillar-bases ; but it does mention the floors made of lime and *kankars*. While not mentioning the pillar-bases, the report does mention remains of at least a building. In the present discussion, that is a very pertinent fact : the Masjid replaced a building. It is up for discussion what kind of building it was, but at least, the choice of possible scenarios has been narrowed down and no longer includes the possibility that the Masjid was built on empty land.

Concealing this all-important fact in a statement that pretends to put distorters of history to shame, is quite a feat. If there was an open intellectual arena in India, rather than a Left-controlled one, the JNU historians would have lost their big name for their attempts at distortion, and maybe also their big mouth.

The JNU historians, all 25 of them, seem to be not aware of the existence of a great many testimonies firmly establishing that the Masjid or at least its courtyard were used by the Hindus for Ram worship since well before the British period. Or they gloss over it. They certainly don't bring up arguments to disprove or somehow undermine this testimony. Since the JNU historians disregard both the relevant archaeological findings and all the documentary evidence, their entire document in no way affects our case.

A.17) Sakina Yusuf Khan doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. But as a journalist, she deserves to be fired. The article *"No pillar-bases at Ayodhya : ASI report"* is blatantly undeontological in several respects.

First of all, while purporting to give B.B. Lal's views on the recently disclosed presence of pillar-bases just near the Babri building, it disregards prof. Lal's recent unambiguous support for the presence of pillar-bases of the 11th century, made public in an article in *Manthan* as well as in an interview with BBC television. Instead, it quotes an earlier report, more than ten years old, in which the details of the findings of the medieval period are not given, and acts as if this is counter-evidence against the recent statements by dr. Gupta about the pillar-bases.

Secondly, it pretends that the ASI report gives as its verdict: no pillar-bases. In reality, such a statement is nowhere present in the report. Since the excavations were primarily concerned with the Ramayana period, the report was very brief on the findings from the medieval period. That is why it only mentioned the kankar/lime floors, not the pillar-bases, and proclaims its own intention not to go into the full details :"The entire later

period was devoid of any special interest." The pillar-bases have been left unmentioned not by way of a verdict, but because at that time, the ASI was not so interested in them.

A.18) Praful Bidwai doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. And that is very serious, because he sets out to lecture people precisely on the issue of history falsification and concoction of evidence. What would Goebbels do if he came back today, and found himself bereft of any evidence to support his case? What absolutely cheap lie would he certainly launch to put his enemies on the defensive? Simple, he would say: "VHP campaign of lies: Goebbels is already here."

Praful Bidwai starts out with a heavy allegation against us: "Concocting archaeological 'evidence' that a Ram temple existed at the disputed site". How can archaeological evidence be "concocted"? Not that we are interested in his magic formula, we have the real evidence. But maybe the pro-Babri faction would like to give it a try.

He attacks dr. Gupta's presentation of the archaeological evidence in *Indian Express* (2/12/90), saying without any proof or even illustration that its conclusion is based on logical fallacies. He says that dr. Gupta failed to show how the pillars had a load-bearing function, that they belonged to the site and to a religious building. But dr. Gupta has argued these points quite convincingly in that article, and in more detail in annexure 28 to our evidence. Moreover, it is only logical that pillars bear weight, that religious sculptures indicate use in a religious building, and it was a general practice to re-use parts of a demolished temple in the very mosque built on top of it. If Praful Bidwai wants to propose an alternative scenario (which he implicitly does by casting doubt on the scenario for which dr. Gupta has given evidence) which goes against common sense, the burden of proof is on him.

Praful Bidwai repeats the JNU historians' exercise in character assassination (reply to dr. Gupta's article, IE 5/12/90) by insinuating that dr. Gupta falsely claims participation in the excavations. The fact of the matter, made clear in *Indian Express* on 6/12/90, well before Praful Bidwai published his article, is that dr. Gupta could not formally be registered as a member of the team, for the statutory reason that he worked for the National Museum, not for the ASI, so he was given "observer" status. Bidwai also levels insinuations against prof. B.B. Lal and mr. Mahadevan, who had aptly called the JNU statement a case of, in their own terminology, "political abuse of history" (IE, 6/12/90).

Bidwai's totalitarian sympathies come out clearly where he protests against the fact that *Indian Express* had dared to publish other views than his own: "The Express's attempt to balance this distortion by dr. Gupta was equally unbalanced. The paper did carry the JNU historians' reply, but only as one of three articles, the other two being pro-Gupta." Two articles were pro-facts and one was Leftist insinuation : secularist India will be damned if this continues. Well, most papers kept their readers entirely in the dark concerning the archaeological findings that clinch the issue in favour of the Mandir. Some give plain lies (see document A.17). The *Times of India* collected replies from a number of academics, but did not inform its readers of the findings that had occasioned this sudden propaganda offensive (except indirectly in the questions put to prof. Romila Thapar). Even if one paper gave only the Hindu view, it would still come nowhere near balancing the black-out on the Hindu view and on the documentary and archaeological facts of this matter, in the press at large.

Bidwai's indignation follows a precedent. When, on 1/4/90, *Indian Express* published the JNU historians' reply to prof. A.R. Khan's article (in which he demolished the JNU historians' methodology and exposed some of their unmistakable attempts at deception), they started out by complaining that *Indian Express* had not published their original and well-known statement, saying they feared that this way, prof. Khan's critique would be too "confusing". Well, it had been published in at least the *Telegraph*, the *Times of India* and the *Illustrated Weekly*, and spread as a separate pamphlet. And still they wanted more publicity, because the Left has come to believe in its own God-given (mmm) right to lord it over the media.

Recently, Dilip Simeon and others protested in a joint letter (ToI, 2/11/90) against the publication of "the VHP viewpoint", viz. a not too anti-Hindu article by Swapan Dasgupta, who is not one of our members, in the *Times of India*, which mostly publishes rabidly anti-Hindu columns like Simeon's own. Of course, the control over the press is crucial when you have to prevent the truth from coming out.

According to mr. Bidwai, these are also parts of Goebbels' propaganda: 'Proving' that the temple was destroyed by 'invaders'..." and "claiming that the only recompense for this act of sacrilege is the demolition of the mosque".

As for the temple destruction, we have given evidence, and mr. Bidwai has only given swearwords and slogans. His own allegations are mere slander until he gives counter-proof. After regularly writing on

"communalism" for a long time, Praful Goebbels has still not come up with anything, and we know why : he doesn't have anything. In order not to be found out, he has to keep up the offensive. Goebbels knew that if you attack people, they tend to go on the defensive rather than put you to scrutiny.

We are not claiming that the relocation of the mosque is the recompense for this act of sacrilege. We claim that the restoration of the three sacred sites in Mathura, Varanasi and Ayodhya is merely a matter of justice : these are Hindu sacred places, not Muslim ones. The mosques there were only built to humiliate the Hindus, and that is why the Hindu-baiters are so insistent on keeping them there.

The recognition of the Hindu rights over their sacred places is of course not a recompense for "this" sacrilege on the sites themselves. They are at most a symbolic recompense for the thousandfold sacrilege, temple-destruction, Kafir-killing, slave-taking, abduction of Kafir women, which the Muslim invaders, egged on by their Scripture and their clerics, have systematically committed in India, as in other Pagan lands they conquered.

This simple recognition that the Hindus have a right to their own sacred places, does by far not amount to a recompense, much less to "avenging of desecration of a Hindu monument by the 'Muslims', as Bidwai represents it. *Avenging* it would mean desecrating the Muslim sacred places in West Asia.

Bidwai rejects the collective term "Muslims", "who mysteriously remain the same continuous subject in history — the present generation being responsible for its ancestors' deeds". But no, we do not think that Muslims are automatically "continuous" with Babar and other invaders. First of all, we are well capable of distinguishing between the mass of people who merely happen to have been born and raised in a Muslim community, and those who are conscious keepers and propagaters of specific Islamic doctrines about subduing and exterminating the unbelievers. And even for those leaders, there is no automatic continuity : it is their own choice, whether to continue the way of Babar or that of Dara Shikoh.

While Muslims come and go, the one "continuous subject in history" is their Scripture, Quran and Hadis. These contain dozens of injunctions to make war on the Kafirs, i.e. on us. Now, it is indeed possible that the present generation of Muslims takes distance from these teachings, or gives a radically new interpretation to terms like "Kafir" and "Jihad". If so, the proof will be that they can at least in a few symbolic instances undo the wrong that the past application of the outdated interpretation of their Scripture has inflicted on the Kafir societies. Recognising the right of the

Hindus to the sacred places that earlier Muslim generations had stolen from them, would indeed be "discontinuous" with Islam's fanatic past.

Mr. Bidwai finds this also Goebbelsian :"Sedulously propagating the lie that the mosque has not been used since 1936 as a place of worship, and therefore the dispute is between a (real) temple and a non-existent mosque about which the Muslims are being mean and unreasonable (unlike the Hindus)". Of course, mr. Bidwai doesn't give a trace of proof that this is a lie.

This "lie" is simply the official version. We would be open to the possibility that the place was used for Muslim prayers even in the forties, but we cannot help it that the Civil Judge of Faizabad observed, in his 3/3/51 judgment : "It further appears from the copies of a number of affidavits of certain Muslim residents of Ayodhya that at least from 1936 onwards the Muslims have neither used the site as a mosque nor offered prayers there and that the Hindus have been performing their Pooja etc. on the disputed site. Nothing has been pointed to discredit these affidavits." Certainly, mr. Bidwai who is lecturing us on abiding by the Court verdict, cannot object to our quoting a Court verdict, based on the unchallenged testimony of local Muslims. While sometimes even a judge's view may later prove erroneous, at any rate it is no proof of being Goebbels, to repeat the text of a Court ruling.

This will do as a comment on Praful Goebbels' slander campaign. There is, on top of all this, the fact that, without referring to any authentic statement, he describes "Hindu Rashtra" as "a blatantly communal society run on majoritarian terror and reduction of [the minority people] to the status of second-class citizens, in which bigotry, violence and intolerance rule". In fact, this is an accurate description not of the Hindu Rashtra to which we aspire, but of Pakistan, the Muslim Rashtra already in existence. But it leaves out (as all Hindu-baiting texts do) an analysis of why Pakistan is like that. It is like that because it is informed by the same anti-Hindu fervour which led to the destruction of the Ram Mandir.

B.1) The six documents of group B don't give any evidence whatsoever, except for our own viewpoint.

The Persian inscriptions on the Babri Masjid show that Mir Baqi built it at the "command" of Shah Babar (*Ba farmuda-i Shah Babar*), and not at his own sweet will. The date given in the inscription fits the time Babar stayed in or near Ayodhya (March-April 1528). The inscriptions are given as evidence of "the construction of Babri Masjid in 1528 AD by Meer Baqi

Tashkandi". We have no quarrel with that. It is standing there, so someone must have built it.

B.2) "Babar's testament", a short but highly surprising declaration of secular kingship, doesn't give any evidence whatsoever that the mosque was built on something else than a destroyed Hindu temple. Otherwise, it proves a lot.

The English note under the Persian text says :"Dr. Tirnusi helped me in deciphering the text and also confirm the evaluation of this document I had made in the first edition of my *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* in 1940." Interesting. What "evaluation of this document " do we find in that 1940 book ?

Firstly, the copied page is in the book from which it was copied (*Babri Mosque or Ram Janam Temple*, by dr. R.L. Shukla and mrs. Nilofer Ahmad), also a copy, from yet another book, by dr. S.R. Sharma. It has uncarefully retained the subscribed note by dr. Sharma, making it easy for us to check this out. Alright, in appendix 9, dr. Sharma gives this testament. But on page no. 24 and 25, the learned author has given a long list of reasons why this document is a modern "forgery and clumsy forgery".

A number of independent scholars have concluded that this document is a forgery. Mrs. Beveridge, for one. She has been quoted very selectively in this compilation. She has listed no less than 15 reasons why it has to be a forgery. Radhey Shyam (in app.4 of his book *Babar*, 1978) rejects a few of these, but not the conclusion. It seems that P. Saran and S. Roy have also concluded that this document is a forgery.

What is this nonsense, including a proven forgery in a pile of "evidence"? It is certainly evidence of something.

B.3) Even Babar's own diary doesn't give any evidence whatsoever, except that he did go to Ayodhya. As is well known, the pages with his notes from the period in which he is supposed to have been in or near Ayodhya, are missing. Interestingly, while one page from mrs. Beveridge's translation of the *Babar Nama* has been presented, the other pages of the appendix dealing with the inscriptions, as also the following two pages with footnotes, and some other relevant pages, have been cleverly concealed. There, mrs. Beveridge restates what was universally believed, and what was recorded in all the successive Gazetteers dealing with Ayodhya : a temple was destroyed there to make way for a mosque.

Then again, it has not really been concealed : in A.11 it has been quoted and vehemently attacked as a "preconceived" piece of "concealment" and "distortion".

B.4) Alexander Cunningham doesn't give any evidence whatsoever that has any bearing on our case. He declares himself that he is primarily interested in the Buddhist sites and monuments as mentioned in the travel accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, particularly Hsuen Tsang's. The short and insignificant references to historical sites of all other religions were only incidental. Thus Cunningham's silence on what didn't concern him, the Ram Janmabhoomi site, is absolutely no proof that the place was not considered as Rama's birth-place, hence sacred to the Hindus. This document is absolutely irrelevant and only meant to increase the bulk of papers sent to the VHP.

And yet, it is useful. Off-hand, Cunningham confirms that Ayodhya is considered Ram's city of birth. And he does not trace any Buddhist monuments at the Janmabhoomi site, thus putting to rest a recent canard floated to keep us busy running after the balloons of "secularist" concoctions.

B.5) Dr. R. Nath doesn't give any evidence whatsoever, relevant to the topic under consideration. He shows that there were different types of mosque structures. Well, so what?

But more interesting for our purpose is dr. Nath's reaction to the inclusion of his text in the AIBMAC "evidence". From a lengthy reply, the Indian Express (3/1/91) has published this excerpt :"The reference to my book is vague and I do not know which statement of mine has been quoted in what context. I have been to the site and have had occasion to study the mosque, privately, and I have absolutely no doubt that the mosque stands on the site of a Hindu temple on the north-western corner of the temple-fortress Ramkot, by which the river Sarayu (Ghaghra) originally flowed."

B.6) Mrs. E.B. Joshi doesn't give any evidence whatsoever. Her 1961 Faizabad Gazetteer is a very late and not unmotivated writing, which suppresses the opinion of the previous Gazetteer authors without invoking any new findings whatsoever that might justify this deletion. Apparently this was done under pressure from the then Government.

It becomes more curious when we see the AIBMAC citing this document that repudiates Neville's Gazetteer, and at the same time citing court

petitions by Muslims that invoke Neville's Gazetteer as evidence. The judgment in document E.25 (p.14) clarifies explicitly that this Gazetteer text is admissible as evidence under section 57 of the Evidence Act.

In this light, mrs. Joshi's silence over the destruction of the temple seems to be wilful suppression of a long held fact of history.

C/D) The C and D groups have to be dealt with together, since they pertain to revenue records and court proceedings which are complementary to eachother. They do give evidence. Court after court and writer after writer has firmly taken the view that the mosque was built here after destroying a pre-existing temple, which they very much regretted. The British Judge in 1886 put it this way :"It is very unfortunate that a mosque should have been built on land held specially sacred by the Hindus". But with his haughty colonial unconcern, he felt that: "As that happened 356 years ago, it is too late to remedy the grievance". The British were objective enough to see the correctness and well-foundedness of the Hindu grievance, but as a matter of colonial policy they didn't want to interfere with the status-quo.

Document D.2 proves at least that the chabootra (not necessarily the first one, given the earlier upheavals between Hindus and Muslims and between both and the British) was set up in 1857, so the Hindu claim to the site cannot be passed off as a recent "political gimmick for building vote-banks" and other such nonsense. Hindu society has never given up its claim to this sacred site.

E/F) The E and F groups of documents don't give any evidence whatsoever, except for what we all know and what is precisely the problem : some Muslims have had official and effective possession of the site for a long time after Babar forcibly took it from the Hindus.

Among the documents relating to the 1949 Hindu reconversion of the building into a place of Ram worship, the Court Order of the Civil Judge of Faizabad, dated 3/3/1951, is conspicuously missing. We surmise that our AIBMAC friends did not want to draw attention to the fact that the Judge was skeptical regarding the Muslim claim of having offered Namaz in the building up till December 1949, and on the contrary cited the unchallenged testimony of local Muslims to the effect that the building had not been used since 1936. But then that is all we have to say about these judicial documents, because we have nc intention of walking into the trap of exchanging the scholarly debate on the evidence for the quarrels of the judicial dispute.

All the legal squabbles over land titles etc. emanating from the situation created by force in 1528, including the matter of the effective use of the building before 1949, are completely irrelevant to the issue about which the Government of India has requested evidence, viz. the forcible demolition of a Hindu temple and its replacement with the Babri Masjid ; and even more irrelevant for the fundamental issue of the restoration to Hindu society of one of the places it holds specially sacred. Even if a mosque forcibly imposed on one of our sacred sites is effectively used as a mosque, it remains just as much a forcibly imposed token of desecration and humiliation.

3. The tactics of dispute

With this total lack of evidence, the AIBMAC cannot hope to clinch the issue in its favour. So, the next best thing it could try, is to prevent the Hindu side from clinching the issue in its favour, by showing that the evidence which we have given, is not really evidence. Though some of our documents have been dug up from the archives only recently, a number of them had been drawn attention to in public forums, so the AIBMAC could have attacked the reliability of those evidences. However, in the long list of AIBMAC documents, there is not a trace of a critique of the four Muslim testimonies presented by Harsh Narain (IE 26/2/1990) or Tieffenthaler's testimony presented by A.K. Chatterjee (IE 26/3/1990). There is also not a trace of evidence for the oft-used explanation that the local people, gullible as Hindus and Muslims both can be, swallowed a story purposely concocted by the British.

The anti-Mandir argumentation in other intellectual forums including the press has also not come up with any evidence that disproves our case or renders our evidence unreliable. The AIBMAC list of documents contains a number of these samples of the anti-Mandir rhetoric that has been spread in the press, which invariably blow a lot of hot air but don't give any evidence whatsoever.

There have been a few attempts to discredit the archaeo-logical conclusions, made public by prof. B.B. Lal and dr. S.P. Gupta. These attempts are not made by competent archaeologists or people who have any kind of first-hand knowledge of the Janmabhoomi archaeology, but by armchair historians like prof. R.S. Sharma or the JNU historians, who happen to be firmly rooted in Marxism, a tradition notorious for its numerous brutal

falsifications of history. In particular, there have been baseless insinuations against the professional integrity of both archaeologists. On top of that, all kinds of untenable denials as well as fantastic alternative explanations of the archaeological findings have been floated. But no evidence.

Competent archaeologists and art historians have come out in support of prof. Lal and dr. Gupta, including Muhammed K.K. (Dy. Superintending Archaeologist, ASI Madras circle, in IE 15/12/90), mr. Iravatham Mahadevan (indologist and editor of *Dinamani*, IE 5/12/90), and dr. R. Nath, author of *History of Mughal Architecture*, whom the AIBMAC had quoted in support of its case. He has confirmed :"I have been to the site and have had occasion to study the mosque, privately, and I have absolutely no doubt that the mosque stands on the site of a Hindu temple on the north-western corner of the temple-fortress Ramkot." (IE 2/1/91) But so far, not one among the Hindu-baiters who have lectured us about the primacy of science over myth, has given up his attachment to the anti-Mandir myth in the face of the incontrovertible scientific evidence.

There is a method in these unscholarly attempts to sow suspicions against the undeniable archaeological facts, though it is not the scientific method. It is like a defence lawyer's attempt to create confusion and thus hold up the clear-cut case of the prosecutor. Perhaps such tactics are alright in court, but in a scholarly debate they are considered highly objectionable, and a definite indication of a commitment to something else than the truth.

A distraction tactic, that is what the entire anti-Mandir argumentation amounts to. Instead of coming up with one genuine piece of evidence, the Babri polemists merely raise new distractions to create confusion. The effect is that, in writing this reply, we have been forced to deal with silly statements made by biased and incompetent people, whose opinions would count for nothing in a sincere academic debate. What did a Hindu-baiting politician like Ramaswamy Naicker know about Ayodhya ? Yet, because his biased layman's opinion is presented as evidence, we are forced to deal with it. To be sure, we are perfectly willing to devote our time to any kind of evidence deemed valid by our opponents, on this occasion. But in the press, where the public opinion is sought to be moulded, it is hardly feasible to go and disprove all these spurious contentions, so bringing them up has effectively created the impression that the anti-Mandir hypothesis really rests on some evidence of its own.

A strong example of these distraction tactics in the AIBMAC bundle of documents, is the fact that no less than eight different hypotheses regarding Rama's birth place have been given : 1) He was never born at all.

2) He was born at an unknown place. 3) He was born at Ayodhya, a few dozen yards north of the Ram Janmabhoomi site, where now the Sita ki Rasoi stands. 4) He was born in the village Ghuram in Panjab. 5) He was born in Afghanistan. 6) He was born on the banks of the Saryu in Nepal. 7) He was born in Benares. 8) He was born in Egypt. So, they expect us to go and disprove all these eight hypotheses, of which they themselves disbelieve at least seven.

A typical case of a story floated in the press to distract from the real debate on the real evidence, is the "theory" that the Janmabhoomi spot housed a Buddhist establishment. The Leftist press is exploiting this canard to the fullest, the AIBMAC evidence mentions it in several places but understandably does not highlight it too much. In tactical terms, the stand that the Masjid was built on empty space, is the first line of defence, and it is still taken by the AIBMAC. The stand that the spot was not empty, but that the building was Buddhist, is the next line of defence, increasingly taken by the Leftists, who realise that the first line has become untenable.

That the Babri Masjid replaced a Buddhist building, is not indicated by any iconographical or documentary evidence (in contrast to the solid iconographical testimony that it was a Vaishnava temple, and the massive written testimony that it was a Rama temple). While there were plenty of Buddhist buildings in North India, the Ram Mandir was not one of them.

But the general proposition that whatever Buddhist establishments existed, were demolished the way the Ram Mandir was demolished, that proposition is of course correct. For the Muslim conquerors, Buddhism was just one sect of Hindu paganism. So, they totally exterminated Buddhism both in Central Asia and in North India. Owing to their centralised and high-profile institutions, the Buddhist monks were an easier target than the decentralised Vedic-Hindu society. The recent canard that Hindus destroyed Nalanda University (destroyed by Muslim conqueror Bakhtiar Khilji) and the Bodh Gaya temple (never destroyed but left unkempt after the Buddhists had been slaughtered by Bakhtiar and other Muslim conquerors), is just an artificial smokescreen to conceal the well-attested fact that Islam did to Buddhism exactly what it did to other sects of Sanatana Dharma as well as to other Pagan traditions wherever it found them.

The strongest weapon of the anti-Mandir polemists has so far been their near-total control of the media. This alone has enabled them to bring into disrepute a firmly established and massively attested tradition, to depict it as "myth" and "distortion", and to float an alternative hypothesis

which is incoherent with our general historical knowledge and in conflict with all the available specific evidence. This mighty propaganda feat, achieved over the last couple of years, is one small instance of a larger operation of history-distortion. This operation seeks to erase from our people's consciousness the memory of the unprecedented crimes committed in the name of Islam.

4. The larger picture

"The Mohammedan conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilisation is a precious thing, whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within." Those are the words of Will Durant, a Western scholar who was not a "Hindu communalist". Its basic statement is but a summary of the massive testimony given by the Muslim invaders and their chroniclers themselves. It is also confirmed by the "silent witnesses", all the leftovers of destroyed temples which have been incorporated in mosques. It is therefore not a "prejudice" or "communal distortion of history", it is just factual.

There is a convenient contention these days, that the "communal" view of history, which sees the Islamic onslaught as the materialisation of a consistent Islamic doctrine rather than as a diffuse coincidence of economical and other secular factors, is merely a British concoction in order to "divide and rule". Thus, R.S. Sharma attributes to the British scholar H.M. Elliot "the best example of British communal historiography", because Elliot "denounces the Muslim rulers in the most severe terms".(*Communal History and Rama's Ayodhya*, p.11) Yet, that tirade does not explain away the fact that Elliot's classic (along with Dowson) *History of India as told by its own Historians*, is entirely based on authentic records by mostly Muslim historians. It is not a concoction or a distortion, but a synthesis of the Muslims' own testimony to the crimes as well as the motives of Muslim conquerors and rulers.

So, when Indian historians have recognised Islamic doctrine as the largest single factor of communal strife in India, it was not because they "were caught in the communal trap laid by British historians", as R.S. Sharma wants us to believe. It was because, as historians, they had to take the authentic testimonies into account. By contrast, the "secularist"

historians have glossed over a mass of authentic information in order to impose their secular explanation on the unwilling facts.

One may always come up with conflicts that have occurred between this sect and that, at some point in time. Of course, any two groups, ethnic, religious, occupational, may at some point develop a conflict between them. But it is temporary and ultimately gives way to a renewed peaceful co-existence. But there are a few ideologies, notably Islam and Marxism-Leninism, that entertain a doctrine of deliberate aggression on and intolerance of other societies. In their case, conflict emanates from an ideological backbone. And instead of conflict situations always gravitating back to a peaceful *modus vivendi*, we see that in their case, strife becomes the rule. That is how Hindu society came to suffer under the systematic onslaught of invaders who had been taught to take pride in killing and oppressing the Pagans, and to emulate the example of desecration of Pagan temples, set by the Prophet.

It is not a communalist concoction that Mohammed took the Kaaba from the Pagans of Arabia, and destroyed all the idols in it. This act, described in detail and glorified in Islamic scripture itself, sets the tone for Islamic behaviour all through the conquest of North Africa and West, Central and South Asia. It cannot be wished away now, no matter how many "secularists" the AIBMAC may invite to shout abuses at the top of their voice against those who restate these simple and well-attested facts.

5. Our demand

The Pagans of Arabia are not there anymore to reclaim their Kaaba. Islam has destroyed them. After that, it has destroyed many more cultures, starting with their places of worship. The Manichaeans, Nestorians and Buddhists of Iran and Central Asia are not there anymore to reclaim their temples and monasteries (and the few Zoroastrians that have survived are too oppressed, too few and too afraid to raise their voice).

But we have survived, though not unscathed, and we do demand the restoration of our most sacred places. We demand that the Muslim community of India recognises the rights of Hindu society to these three shrines: Kashi Vishvanath in Varanasi, Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura, and Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya.

Against this perfectly reasonable demand, yet another smear campaign has been unleashed, saying that we preach "revenge". Revenge

would mean that we go and destroy the Muslim sacred places in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. We have no intention of doing that. It would also mean wars of conquest, persecution, killing of millions, abducting millions of women and children into slavery, short, a mirror-image of what the Muslim conquerors and rulers have done to Hindu society. We have no inclination at all to inflict revenge on the Muslim community.

We do not even demand "compensation" or "restitution". The AIBMAC does not have the power to give us Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangla Desh back. It does not have the power to bring the millions of victims of Jihad back to life. The Germans also had no power to bring the victims of Auschwitz back to life. But at least, they have expressed their regrets without any reservation or ambiguity.

We do not even demand the return of the thousands of places of worship that have been forcibly replaced with mosques. Let the local Muslim communities continue to use them. All we demand, is the return of *three* sacred places.

Right now in the Soviet Union, Muslims as well as Christians and Buddhists are claiming and getting their erstwhile places of worship back, which the Communists had confiscated and put to all kinds of secular uses. The offices and whatever else had been installed in them, have to be lodged some place else now. But that, as well as the fact that these communities had been doing without these places of worship for seventy years, has not been taken as a reason for keeping the status-quo.

We merely want *three* places back, three age-old sacred places. And we would prefer getting them back from the Muslim community, to getting them back by an official decree. For the Muslim community, this is an excellent opportunity to make up voluntarily for the huge massacres, persecutions, slave-takings, abductions, temple-destructions and swordpoint conversions which its earlier generations inflicted upon Hindu society, as on other non-Muslim communities both in India and elsewhere.

In the past two years, many nations and communities have chosen to make a formal recognition of past errors, and apologised to the victims or their descendants. The Japanese people, through their prime minister as well as their new emperor, have apologised to the Korean people for the oppression in the half century preceding 1945. The Soviet Union has apologised to the Koreans for the start of the Korean war. The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has apologised to the blacks for its ideological support for the Apartheid system. The Soviet leaders have recognised the guilt of their predecessors in the Katyn massacre of Polish

officers. They have corrected the text on the Katyn monument and held a joint ceremony on the spot with the Polish president. The way to make a new beginning goes via the recognition of the wrongs of the past.

So, the time is ripe. And we would like the Indian Muslim community to rise to the occasion of its own free will. After all, two mosques and one non-mosque are a very small price for an immense gesture of goodwill, which will convince Hindu society that the Muslims have effectively broken with the unhappy record of their predecessors. For us these places are no less sacred than Kerbela or the Al-Aqsa mosque are for the Muslims. Muslims should understand what kind of message they are sending by insisting on continuing the occupation of our sacred places, an occupation which was started by fanatics and mass-murderers like Babar and Aurangzeb. We do not like to think of our Muslim compatriots as heirs and followers of such invaders and tyrants. It is up to them to make a gesture that will signify a formal break with this painful past.

We do believe that religions and societies can be reformed. When the Christians came to India, they broke our idols and practised conversion by force. They don't do that anymore. So, we are convinced that religious reform in the sense of a profound humanisation is possible. We do not want to keep identifying the Muslim community with the crimes inflicted on us by some of their predecessors. And precisely because we believe that the past can be forgotten as soon as the concerned parties agree to do so, we expect the Muslim community in India to come forward and make a gesture that will turn this unfortunate page.

We will conclude this plea for a gesture of goodwill and historical honesty, with a quote from one of the AIBMAC documents. This document, Babar's testament to Humayun, which is such a nice piece of secularism, has unfortunately been shown to be a forgery. Not that this is dramatic : so many declarations of secularism are also of doubtful genuineness.

Anyway, since our AIBMAC friends believe that Babar's will is an authentic and authoritative statement, we appeal to them to abide by it, especially where it says : "People of diverse religions inhabit Hindustan. You should not allow religious prejudices to influence your mind, and administer impartial justice, having due regard to religious susceptibilities and religious customs of all sections of the people. In particular, refrain from the slaughter of cows, for that is the way to win the hearts of the people of Hindustan... You should never destroy the places of worship of any community..."(p.272 of S.R. Sharma : *The Crescent in India*)

So, we appeal to the All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee, to all Muslim Indians and in fact to all people of goodwill, to fulfil Babar's last wish. We call on them to join Hindu society in enacting an all-India ban on cow slaughter, and to respect the Hindu sacred places, especially Kashi Vishvanath, Krishna Janmabhoomi and Ram Janmabhoomi.

Summary of the Ram Janmabhoomi Evidence

released to the press on January 10, 1991

1. Sacredness of the site

The Ram Janmabhoomi site has been a sacred site for crores of Hindus since time immemorial, and was kept alive as a focus of Ram devotion even in the face of the forcible Muslim occupation of the site during more than four centuries. Why this is a sacred site, is beyond the limits of the dispute, firstly because the Government of India had asked us for evidence for the pre-existence of the Mandir on the Babri Masjid site, no more, no less ; and secondly because we do not have to prove and justify the sacredness of our sacred sites, anymore than the Muslims have ever been asked to prove that, against all available indications, the Kaaba was built by Abraham.

Many dozens of Sanskrit texts from the first millennium BC and the first millennium AD attest the veneration for Ram, and put to rest recent allegations that the Ram cult became popular only in the last few centuries. There is multiple archaeological and iconometrical evidence for Ram worship since at least the 5th century AD.

2. Archaeological evidence for the temple

Archaeological excavations have brought to light the remains of an 11th century building on the disputed site. This was already clear from the first brief report of the excavations led by prof. B.B. Lal in 1975-80 (though motivated "eminent historians" have tried first to conceal and later to deny this pertinent fact), but recently more details have been made public, especially the rows of pillar-bases, aligned with the pillars of the

present structure. Datable pottery remains indicate that the building was in use till at least the late 15th century. Nothing points to a period of disuse between this building's demolition and the Masjid's erection. But the "robber's trench" around the pillar-bases indicates that the materials of the demolished building had been taken for use in a new building, probably the Masjid.

That the pre-existing building was a Mandir, is coherent with all the evidence so far, and requires no special assumptions or ad hoc hypotheses. More importantly, it is positively indicated by the 14 black pillars of schistose used in the Masjid. Documentary evidence from the 18th century as well as common sense dictate that, in conformity with a general pattern, these were materials of the demolished temple incorporated in the Masjid built over it. The disfigured sculptures on the black pillars all belong to Hindu religious iconography. Some of the motifs are common to different traditions, including Buddhist and Shaiva, but some are specifically Vaishnava.

All indications converge easily, without any artificial theoretical assumptions, on the hypothesis that a Vaishnava temple stood on the Janmabhoomi site until it was forcibly replaced with the Masjid. That it was specifically a Ram temple, is indicated by a wealth of documentary evidence.

3. Documentary evidence for the temple tradition

There are plenty of authentic documents available that unanimously prove two things : everyone agreed, and no one ever doubted, that the site on which the Babri Masjid was built, was taken from the Hindus ; and the Hindu devotees kept coming back to the site for worship. Some sources suggest that in some periods the Hindus even used the Masjid itself. At any rate they set up a Ram chabootra just outside the Masjid, and in the 18th century they also built a make-do Janmasthan temple just nearby.

Among the most remarkable of the Muslim testimonies, we may mention the Chahal *Nasaih*, written by Aurangzeb's granddaughter around 1700, in which she exhorts Muslims to assert their presence in the "places of worship of the Hindus situated at Mathura, Banaras and Awadh etc., in which the Kafirs have great faith — the birthplace of Kanhaiya, the place of Rasoi Sita, the place of Hanuman... were all destroyed for the strength of Islam, and at all these places mosques have been constructed". Ten other

testimonies of local Muslims confirm that the Babri Masjid had replaced the Ram Janmasthan temple. That Hindus kept coming for worship as nearby the site as possible, and that they kept claiming the site, is attested by a number of these same sources, as well as by a Faizabad Qazi in 1735.

Among the European records, the most remarkable is probably Josef Tieffenthaler's (1767), who describes in detail how Hindus kept on worshipping in the Masjid courtyard, with a big celebration on Ram Navami day, and how everyone believed that the pre-existent Ram Mandir had been forcibly replaced with the Masjid, though opinions differed on whether this had been done by Babar or Aurangzeb. All the British surveyors, archaeologists and Gazetteer-writers, as well as the District Judge of Faizabad in 1886, saw no reason at all to doubt the unanimous local tradition that the Masjid had been built on the forcibly demolished temple marking Ram's birthplace.

Revenue records show that the disputed site has always been known as Janmasthan. Recent attempts to manipulate these records cannot change that, just like recent attempts to conceal or even obliterate pieces of testimony by local Muslims cannot change the facts to which these uncalculating witnesses testified.

4. Evidence must be coherent

All these authentic testimonies of various kinds converge, without exception, on the following scenario. A Ram Mandir standing on the now-disputed site since the 11th century was demolished and replaced by a Muslim ruler, probably Babar or his aide Mir Baqi, who flaunted the victory over Paganism by using and displaying some of the temple pillars in his Masjid. But because the place was so sacred to them, the Hindus kept on trying to continue the worship on the site, or as close as possible.

This scenario, which is confirmed by all the available evidence of every kind, is moreover in perfect consonance with well-attested behaviour patterns of people in general (who built castles or temples on elevated and central places), of Muslim rulers (who destroyed thousands of temples to replace them with mosques, and often visibly displayed the iconoclastic origin of their Masjid), and of Hindu devotees (who in many cases kept on revering the desecrated site).

5. The AIBMAC non-evidence

In contrast to our own collection of coherent testimony for one precise scenario, our AIBMAC friends have just given a pile of papers, without adding even an attempt to show the coherence, the proof value, or even just the relevance of this pile. Their documentation consists of :

1) casual statements of opinion by 20th century writers supporting all kinds of conflicting scenarios (most of them not even concerning the pre-existence of the Mandir), including outright crank theories ;

2) a large number of documents relative to judicial disputes, which all emanate from the unjust situation created by the forcible Muslim take-over, and are therefore irrelevant to the question under consideration, viz. what was there just before the Masjid was built ;

3) exactly three documents relevant to the historical question under consideration, of which one has the relevant pages missing (Babar's diary), one is not a matter of dispute between us (the inscriptions on the Masjid declaring that it was built by Mir Baqi on Babar's orders), and one is a proven forgery (Babar's testament).

There is absolutely nothing in our AIBMAC friends' documentation that proves their point or disproves our evidence. It is in fact not even collected or presented as evidence for *something*. Any statement by any crackpot or secularist is included as long as it disagrees with the well-established consensus for which we have presented a mass of corroborating evidence, and regardless of mutual contradictions.

One example out of a dozen : while disputing the belief that Ram was born on the Janmabhoomi site, they do not build up coherent evidence that he was born at a specific other site. Instead, they give "evidence" that Ram was born in Nepal, in Panjab, in Afghanistan, in Egypt, in Varanasi, in Ayodhya on a different site, in an unknowable other place, or not at all. So, each of these 8 "evidences" is contradicted by 7 other pieces of "evidence" in the AIBMAC's own pile.

Obviously, they did not even attempt to build a case for an alternative scenario to the one for which we have given evidence. They just wanted to make us dissipate our energy on disproving all manner of inconsistent and spurious contentions. And they counted on the sloppiness, ignorance or bias of the press, to present their quantity of worthless arguments as a genuine counter-weight to our coherent body of evidence.

6. The rebuttal

In our rejoinder, we have dealt with all the AIBMAC documents relevant to the historical question, but the AIBMAC has not replied to our own evidence. Their only reply was yet another set of the same kind of documents, again containing not a trace of evidence that the Masjid was built on something else than a forcibly destroyed Mandir. They have not given any rebuttal whatsoever to our evidence. Since they have not challenged our evidence, not even in this round of Government-sponsored scholarly contest, they must be considered as having accepted our evidence.

7. This debate is now closed

Since our AIBMAC friends have not disproven nor even denied the validity of the evidence we have given, the way we have demonstrated the utter inadequacy of their bulky but incoherent and irrelevant documentation, our evidence stands. It should now count as a proven proposition, i.e. supported by all the evidence available, not disproven and not even challenged, that the Babri Masjid was built on a Hindu sacred place, forcibly replacing a Mandir.

All the Babri polemists and secularist intellectuals who were so cocksure in lambasting us for clinging on to "myths", spreading "distortions" and denying "history", now have to face the fact that it is we who have given conclusive evidence, while they have merely given politically motivated opinions and swearwords, apart from erudite considerations on issues beside the point. From now on (as until a few years ago), the established historical opinion is that the Babri Masjid has forcibly replaced a Ram Mandir built on a specially sacred Hindu site.

In our opinion, any Government decisions should from now on honour this established position of historical science, without giving in to further distraction manouevres such as calls for "non-partisan" arbitration. Since our evidence has not even been challenged by the AIBMAC, there is no need for any arbitration. The historical facts themselves are the only competent and non-partisan arbitrator, and they have spoken through the authentic and unchallenged testimonies which we have collected and submitted to the Government.

8. Our request

Since it is now firmly established, and no longer being competently challenged, that the disputed site was one of the Hindu sacred places, we would like to ask our Muslim friends and fellow-countrymen the following questions :

1) In the Middle Ages, theologians and conquerors told you it was alright to destroy and occupy other communities' sacred places. Now in this age of secularism, do you still insist on continuing this occupation, or do you opt for "equal respect for all religions"? We are not occupying your Kaaba or Al-Aqsa mosque, so is it not time you renounce the occupation of our most sacred places ?

2) The last few years, motivated politicians and anti-Hindu propagandists, both communalist and communist, have concocted the theory that there was no temple at this site, that the Masjid was innocently built on empty land. Given the pretentious titles they flaunted, like "protectors of Islam" and "eminent historians", we can understand that you were misled into believing their made-up story. But now, scientific research has firmly established that this theory was indeed a concoction, and that the Masjid was built on a Hindu sacred site. Even the AIBMAC has not challenged the evidence which re-establishes that the Masjid has replaced a Hindu temple by force. In view of the renewed certainty that this Masjid was wilfully located on a Hindu sacred site in order to disturb and humiliate the religious practices of your Hindu fellow-countrymen, do you still insist on resuming the occupation of our Ram Janmabhoomi site, or do you agree to leave this Hindu sacred site to the Hindus ?

Appendix 1

Takeover from the Experts

by Arun Shourie

For a year and a half you keep issuing statements to the press, and writing ostensibly scholarly articles, and holding forth in interviews that the Babri Mosque was not, most definitely not built by demolishing or even on the site of a temple. Documents of the other side are sent to you. You are nominated by the All India Babri Mosque Action Committee as an expert who will give his assessment of them. A meeting is scheduled. Before that you meet the then Director General of Archaeology who had supervised the excavations at the site. The day the meeting is to begin the newspapers carry yet another categorical statement from "intellectuals", again asserting the line convenient to the AIBMAC. You of course are among them.

The meeting commences. On point after point, on document after document your response is that you have not studied the evidence, that therefore you require time: that you have never seen the site, that therefore you require time to visit it.

You are not a field archaeologist you say, and will therefore nominate another person, and he too will naturally require time..... The person happens to be present. You are informed that the person has not only studied the evidence, he has met and discussed the matter with the Director General of Archaeology, and also with the previous Director General, Dr. B.B. Lal, under whose supervision the excavations had been conducted in 1975-80. Others too who are named whom he has met for the purpose. But that was in another capacity, you say, now he will need time...

On behalf of the Government the officer present says that the records of the excavation — maps, four types of narrative accounts, photographs — are available, that Dr. Lal has agreed so that they can be inspected the very next day. No... we will need time...

You are on to a new tack. But why has Dr. Lal not stated a definite conclusion? In fact it turns out that he has; a video-cassette of the interview he gave to the BBC is produced. Can't see it now as there is no VCP... Will need time...

The next day you don't even turn up for the meeting.

An expert of the AIBMAC. A Marxist. An intellectual whose name appears invariably in the statements propagandising the AIBMAC point of view.

I summarise, but the account applies more or less to the four professional "experts" who appeared as the AIBMAC's nominees in the meeting on January 24.

The other "experts" of the AIBMAC were just its own office-bearers. They went one better. They "denied" the contents, indeed it seemed the very existence of books written not just by Islamic historians and authors — the photocopies of the relevant pages from which had all been supplied weeks earlier — they "denied" the knowledge of even standard works like the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*!

That done, the next day they did not turn up either.

The issue specified

The one thing on which Chandra Shekhar's government can claim to have catalysed progress is the Janmabhoomi controversy. This was done in two ways: by getting the two sides to begin talking to each other, and by pin-pointing the issue. The issue Chandra Shekhar emphasised was; Was the mosque built by demolishing a Hindu temple or structure ?

And in this Chandra Shekhar was adhering to what had been stated categorically on behalf of the Muslims: "On behalf of Muslims," a major protagonist of the matter had, as Justice Deokinandan recalls, stated in his treatise on the subject, "I.....say that if it is proved that Babri Masjid has been built after demolishing Rama Janma Bhoomi Mandir on its place, then such a mosque built on such a usurped land deserves to be destroyed. No theologian or Alim can give a Fatwa to hold Namaz on it." And this view in turn reflected classical expositions of the law. For instance the *Fatwa-e-Alamgiri* categorically states:

"It is not permissible to build a mosque on unlawfully acquired land. There may be many forms of unlawful acquisition. For instance, if some people forcibly take somebody's house (or land) and build a

mosque or even a Jama Masjid on it, then Namaz in such a mosque will be against the Shariat."

In consultation with the two sides therefore Chandra Shekhar made the issue specific. Each side agreed to submit evidence on this specific issue.

The AIBMAC evidence

I was appalled when I saw what the AIBMAC had furnished. It was just a pile of papers. You were expected to wade through them and discover the relevance they had or the inference which flowed from them.

I read them dutifully, and was soon convinced that the leaders of the All India Babri Masjid Committee and the intellectuals who had been guiding them had themselves not read them.

It wasn't just that so much of it was the stuff of cranks: pages from the book of some chap to the effect that Rama was actually a Pharaoh of Egypt; an article by someone based he says on what he has learnt from one dancer in Sri Lanka, and setting out a folk story, knowledge of which he himself says is confined to a small part of a small district in that country, to the effect that Sita was Rama's sister whom he married, etc.

It was not just that so much of the rest was as tertiary as can be — articles after articles by sundry journalists which set out no evidence.

It was that the overwhelming bulk of it was just a pile of court papers — selective court judgements, a decree without the judgement underlying it, some merely the plaints, i.e. the assertions of the parties that happen at the moment to be convenient— and it was that document after document in this lot buttressed the case not of the All India Babri Masjid Committee but of the VHP !

They show that the mosque had not been in use since 1936.

They show that it had been in utter neglect: the relevant authority testifying at one point to the person-in-charge being an opium-addict, to his being thoroughly unfit to look after even the structure.

They show different groups or sects of Muslims fighting each other for acquiring the property, with the descendants of Mir Baqi, the commander who built the structure, maintaining that the lands etc. which were given to them by the British were given not so that they may maintain the structure through the proceeds but so that they may main-

tain themselves, and that they were given these for the services — political and military — they had rendered to the British.

It was evident too that it would be difficult to sustain the claim that the structure was a waqf, as was being maintained now, it was not even listed in the lists of either the Shia or Sunni Waqf Boards, as the law required all waqf properties to be.

While the Babri Masjid Committee has striven now to rule out of court British gazetteers — as these, after meticulous examination of written and other evidence, record unambiguously that the mosque was built after demolishing the Ramajanmabhoomi temple—the rulings and judgements filed by the AIBMAC rely on, reproduce at length and accept the gazetteers on the very point at issue. Indeed, they explicitly decree that the gazetteers are admissible as evidence !

They show the Hindus waging an unremitting struggle to regain this place held, the documents say, "most sacred" by them: they show them continuing to worship the ground inspite of the mosque having been super-imposed on it; they show them constructing structures and temples on the peripheral spots when they are debarred from the main one.

They show the current suit being filed well, well past the time limit allowed by our laws...

On reading the papers the AIBMAC had filed as "evidence", I could only conclude, therefore, that either its leaders had not read the papers themselves, or that they had no case and had just tried to overawe or confuse the government etc. by dumping a huge miscellaneous heap.

The VHP documents

In complete contrast the VHP documents are pertinent to the point, and have not as yet been shown to be deficient in any way.

They contain the unambiguous statements of Islamic historians, of Muslim narrators — from the grand-daughter of Aurangzeb — to the effect that the mosque was built by demolishing the Rama temple.

They contain accounts of European travellers as well as official publications of the British period — the gazetteers of 1854, of 1877, of 1881, of 1892 of 1905; the Settlement Report of 1880; the Surveyor's Report of 1838; the Archaeological Survey Reports of 1891, of 1934 — all of them reaffirming what the Muslim historians had stated: that the

mosque was built by destroying the temple, that portions of the temple — e.g., the pillars — are in the mosque still, that the Hindus continue to rever the spot and struggle unremittingly to reacquire it.

They contain revenue records of a hundred years and more which list the site as "Janmasthan" and specify it to be the property of the *mahants*. They also show how attempts have been made to erase things from these records and superimpose convenient nomenclatures on them— crude and unsuccessful attempts, for while the forgers have been able to get at the records in some offices they have not been able to get at them in all the offices !

Most important of all, they contain accounts of the archaeological excavations which were conducted at the site from 1975 to 1980. These are conclusive; the pillar-bases, the pillars, the door jamb, the periods of the different layers, the alignment of the bases and the pillars, the stone of which the pillars are made.... Everything coheres. And everything answers the issue the government and the two sides had specified in the affirmative, and unambiguously so.

"Contemporary account"

"But where in all this is the contemporary account of the temple being destroyed ?"

At first it was, "Show us any document". When the gazetteers were produced, it was, "But the British wrote only to divide and rule (why then do you keep producing judgements of British Magistrates, pray ?). Show us some non-British document, some pre-British document".

Now that these too are at hand, the demand is for a contemporary account. This when it is well-known that in the contemporary account of the period—Babar's own memoir — the pages from the time he reaches Ayodhya, 2 April 1528, to 18 September 1528 are missing — lost it is hypothesised by the historian in a storm or in the vicissitudes which Humayun's library suffered during his exile.

It is not just that this latest demand is an afterthought. It is that in the face of what exists at the site to this day — the pillars etc. — and in the face of the archaeological findings, and what has been the universal practice as well as the fundamental faith of Islamic evangelists and conquerors such accounts are not necessry.

But there is an even more conclusive consideration. Today a contemporary account is being demanded in the case of the Babri

Mosque. Are those who make this demand prepared to accept this as the criterion — that if a contemporary account exists of the destruction of a temple for constructing a mosque the case is made ?

This is what the entry for 2 September, 1669 for instance is in as contemporary an account as any one can ask for: "News came to Court that in accordance with the Emperor's command his officers had demolished the temple of Vishwanath at Banaras....."

The entry for January 1670 sets out the facts for the great temple at Mathura: "In this month of Ramzan, the religious-minded Emperor ordered the demolition of the temple at Mathura... In a short time by the great exertions of his officers the destruction of this strong centre of infidelity was accomplished... A grand mosque was built on its site at a vast expenditure... The idols, large and small, set with costly jewels which had been set up in the temple were brought to Agra and buried under the steps of the Mosque of the Begum Sahib in order to be continually trodden upon. The name of Mathura was changed to Islamabad..."

The entry for 1 January 1705 says: "The Emperor, summoning Muhammed Khalid and Khidmat Rai, the *darogha* of hatchetmen... ordered them to demolish the temple at Pandharpur, and to take the butchers of the camp there and slaughter cows in the temple... It was done."

If the fact that a contemporary account of the temple at Ayodhya is not available leaves the matter unsettled, does the fact that contemporary accounts are available for the temples at Kashi, Mathura, Pandharpur and a host of other places settle the matter ?

One has only to ask the question to know that the "experts" and "intellectuals" will immediately ask for something else.

Historicity

"But there is no proof that Rama himself existed; nor are any of the other facts about him proven."

The four Gospels themselves, to say nothing of the work that has been done in the last hundred years, differ on fact after fact about Jesus—from the names of his ancestors to the crucifixion and resurrection. The Quran repudiates even the most basic facts about him—it emphatically denounces the notion that he was the Son of God, it repudiates the notion of his virgin birth, it insists that he was not the one

who was crucified but a look-alike, thereby putting the resurrection out of the question altogether. And which member of the AIBMAC will say that the Quran is not an authentic recounting of the facts ? Does that mean that every single church rests on myth?

Nor is the historicity of the Prophet the distinguishing feature about him. Every ordinary person living today is historically verifiable after all. The unique feature about the Prophet is that Allah chose him to transmit the Quran. But it would be absurd to ask anyone to prove the fact of Allah having chosen him. It is a matter of faith.

Indeed the uniquences of the Quran itself is a matter of faith. What we have and read and revere is the reproduction of the original which lies in heaven inscribed on tablets of gold. And it is the contents of that original which Allah transmitted through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet. Heaven, the original on tablets of gold, Allah's decision, Gabriel — do we prove these? They too are matters of faith.

And every mosque is a celebration of those separate foci of faith.

Specific mosques are even more so. The great Al-Aqsa mosque marks the print which the Prophet's foot made as he alighted from the winged horse which had carried him on his journey to heaven. Heaven, the journey, the winged horse, the imprint of one particular foot—in regard to which of these would we entertain a demand for "proof" ?

The Hazaratbal mosque in Kashmir enshrines what we revere as the hair of the Prophet. Would we think of proving the matter ?

And yet that is what we are insisting the devotees of Rama do.

Conclusion

The Muslim laity have been badly misled, and now been badly let down by those who set themselves up as their guardians and sole-spokesmen. First they created the scare that were any reasonable solution to be accepted on this matter Islam would be endangered. Now they have failed to substantiate their rhetoric.

Now that they seem to be finding excuses to withdraw from examining the evidence, we are liable to be plunged back into the vicious politics of manipulating politicians by tempting them with promises of delivering banks of votes—that is, the precise politics which has fomented the current reaction.

We can stem the relapse. As the experts have withdrawn, each of us should secure the documents submitted by the two sides and exam-

ine them in the minutest detail. Once we do so it will be that much more difficult for propagandists to thwart this singular effort to introduce reason and reasonableness into the problem.

(Syndicated article, 27 January 1991)

Appendix 2

In the name of "history"

(Prof. A. R. KHAN replies to the widely-read pamphlet by a group of eminent historians from Jawaharlal Nehru University, on the Ramjanmabhumi-Babri Masjid controversy.)

A PAMPHLET titled "The Political Abuse of History: Babri Masjid- Rama Janmabhumi Dispute" issued by the faculty members of the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru Univesity, has raised certain questions which must be taken cognisance of, particularly in view of the fact that the pamphlet is issued in the names of historians, among others, like Sarvapalli Gopal, Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra and Harbans Mukhia, written with the avowed object of "demarcation between the limits of belief and historical evidence" as the sacred duty of a historian. The above historians are well known for their secular approach to history and have never missed an opportunity of projecting their secularism by correcting misconceptions of history through "historical evidence" and scientific reasoning in the national interest and perhaps also in the interest of objectivity in history.

However, their conscious intervention on such occasions and their over-enthusiasm have often made issues out of non-issues and have generated uncalled for controversies. The pamphlet under reference is a good example, which instead of clinching the issue has raised doubts about what is academically a non-issue. They have taken pains to prove what is axiomatic: that there is no evidence to prove that the disputed monument is at the precise site of the birth of the hero of Valmiki's *Ramayana* and that there is no evidence to prove that the mosque in question was built either by demolishing or converting a temple. We do not have to muster evidence to prove that there is no evidence. But the arguments advanced by them will not carry any weight either with the

adherents of reason or with those who are the victims of "popular belief." What is contested here is not the conclusions, or the noble mission of the sponsors of the pamphlet but the historical method, the method adopted "to review the historical evidence," mainly for the reason that the whole attempt not only sounds like an apologia for the deeds or misdeeds of Muslim rulers of medieval India, but smacks of polemic despite claims to the contrary. On the whole it is elusive in character.

In their effort to set the events in a historical perspective the authors rightly begin with the *Ramayana* of Valmiki and state: "Since this is a poem and much of it could have been fictional, including characters and places, historians cannot accept the personalities, the events or locations as historically authentic unless there is other supporting evidence regarded as more reliable by historians." However, despite their reservations about accepting Valmiki's characters, places, personalities, events and locations as authentic, they have not paused awhile in uncritically accepting Valmiki's poetic exaggeration identifying Rama with the *Treta Yuga*, for it would then be easy to show, as they have done, that there was no habitation in the *Treta Yuga* in the area where Ayodhya is located and, thus, would help in demolishing the belief about Rama's association with the present day Ayodhya. The very premise on which they have built their argument to disprove Rama's association with the present day Ayodhya rests on their acceptance of Valmiki's allusion to the *treta* age, which no historian even of a lesser order would accept. The argument that archaeological evidence does not show any trace of habitation or urban complex in region before the eighth century B.C. (not to talk of the *treta* age) can be met by drawing the inference that Valmiki was projecting back the post-eighth century B.C. description of Ayodhya to the times of his hero, or may be the description of his own times.

Writing about the supposed location of Ayodhya, with reference to the early Buddhist and Jain texts, and telling us that its earlier name was Saketa, they argue: "There are **very few** (emphasis mine) references to an Ayodhya, but this is said to be located on the Ganges, not on river Saryu which is the site of present day Ayodhya." The fact is that there are references to Ayodhya, though not as many as our authors would have wished so as to accept these reference as authentic. What is more important here is the statement that the Ayodhya referred to in the Buddhist and Jain texts is mentioned as located on river

Ganges, not on Sarayu which is the location of the present day Ayodhya notwithstanding the controversy regarding the possible mistake in identification of Sarayu as the Ganges. If the Ayodhya of the Buddhist and the Jain texts is identified as located on the Ganges only a **few times**, it is possible, on the basis of the logic of **fewness** of references that in all probability Ganges is confused with Sarayu.

The contention that it was the town of Saketa which was renamed Ayodhya by Skanda Gupta in the late 5th century A.D. "to gain prestige for himself by drawing on the tradition of Suryavamshi kings, a line to which Rama is said to have belonged", concedes the fact that the **tradition** of Rama and his association with Ayodhya had gained credibility in the minds of people as early as 1500 years ago, that is, much before the birth of Islam and its introduction in India, to the extent that the Gupta king could hope to gain prestige by merely renaming a town as Ayodhya (although there is no evidence to suggest that Skanda Gupta renamed it to gains prestige). It is ironical that the authors are willing to accept Asoka's identification of Lumbini as Buddha's birthplace two centuries after Buddha (without there being any evidence to this effect during the intervening two centuries) but not Skanda Gupta's identification of Saketa as the Ayodhya of Rama a few centuries later.

In section II of the pamphlet the thrust of the argument is that Ayodhya's rise as a major centre of Rama worship is of recent origin. In support of this contention they have advanced two major pieces of evidence i.e. neither the "Inscriptions from fifth to eighth centuries A.D." nor the "texts of the eleventh century A.D." mention the Rama-Ayodhya association, though they bear references to Ayodhya. The absence of a reference to the Rama-Ayodhya association in the above works is a non-evidence on the issue. Much depends upon the context in which the above inscriptions and the texts were written. Not every inscription or every text is expected to mention every fact. Not every history written during the reign of Aurangzeb or about Aurangzeb bearing references to Delhi and Lahore mentions the existence of the Jama Masjid at Delhi or the construction of the Shahi Masjid by Aurangzeb in Lahore or the Moti Masjid in the Delhi fort.

The authors have also tried to emphasize that Ayodhya was an important centre of Jainism and Buddhism. This does not in any way minimize the importance of Ayodhya as a non-Buddhist centre too, for they themselves accept that the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who vis-

ited India in the 7th century and has mentioned "many monasteries and stupas" in Ayodhya, does notice the existence of a "few non-Buddhists" (shrines). It is again a question of **many** and **few**. But what is more intriguing is the fact that our authors have concealed that the "non-Buddhist" shrines mentioned by Hsuan Tsang were Brahmanical. Similarly, the discovery of 4th-3rd century B.C., Jaina terracotta at Ayodhya does not by any means prove Rama's dissociation from Ayodhya.

The effort to equate the genesis of Rama's worship and popularity only with the rise of the Ramanandi sect in the thirteenth century, and their subsequent settlement in Ayodhya from the 15th to the present century, betrays not only the ignorance of the beliefs of the Hindu masses but contradicts the earlier contention that it was as early as the fifth century A.D. that Skanda Gupta identified the fictional Ayodhya with Saketa, transferred his residence to that place and renamed it as Ayodhya "to gain prestige for himself."

Passing on to a discussion of the mosque in question the authors rightly state in the opening part of Section III that "so far no evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had been earlier occupied by a temple." But the next para opens on a negative note suggesting reservations about accepting the contents of the verses inscribed on the mosque, to the effect that it was built by the order of Babur. They state: "**Except for the verses** (emphasis mine) in Persian there is no **other primary evidence** (emphasis mine) to suggest that a mosque had been erected there on Babur's behalf." One wonders what **other primary evidence,** other than a contemporary inscription, is required to prove that the mosque was built by Babur's orders, particularly when one inscription at Lumbini believed to have been put up by Asoka Maurya two hundred years after Buddha's death, has been considered by the same historians as a proof of the "historical certainty of the birth place of the Buddha" without there being any **other primary evidence.** Further, to the bewilderment of any reader of the pamphlet, despite their reproducing in quotes the translation of the inscribed verses from one of the appendices of Mrs. Beveridge's English translation of the *Baburnama* (which has been incorrectly referred to as the first translation) which reads "**By the command of the Emperor Babur** (emphasis mine)...the good hearted Mir Baqi built the alighting place of angles," the authors persist in their belief in the very next sentence that "the inscription **only** (emphasis mine) claims that one Mir Baqi, a noble of Babur, had

erected the mosque." Here all reasoning of the advocates of "historical evidence" fails and only "belief" prevails upon them in rejecting, without giving any reason, the contention of the inscription that the mosque was built by the "command of Emperor Babur." Notwithstanding the conflict between "evidence" and "belief", of which the authors themselves appear to be victims, as witnessed above, they rightly mention that there is no reference in Babur's memoirs to the destruction of any temple in Ayodhya. However, in this context, it may be pointed out that there is a lacuna in Babur's narrative between 2 April and 18 September 1528, the period during which (according to the date of the incription) the mosque was built, as some pages of Babur's memoirs are missing. As such, it is not surprising that there is no reference in the *Baburnama* to the destruction of a temple, if so done. It was during this period of lacuna that Babur visited Oudh.

Equally fallacious are the arguments that Akbar's official historian, Abul Fazl, does not make "any mention of the erection of the mosque by the grandfather of the author's patron on the site of the temple of Rama" in his *Ain-i-Akabari* and that even Tulsi does not mention about the demolition of a temple. Everyone knows that the *Ain* is not the sort of work to look for such evidence, as it is primarliy a sort of gazetteer of Akbar's empire, giving the rules and regulations of Akbar and the statistical information about various spheres of his administration. It is only in passing that he has mentioned the notable places in different *subas* of Akbar's empire. He has not given the history of each and every monument in Akbar's empire. One can cite a long list of pre-Akbari monuments, still extant, which do not find mention in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Regarding Tulsi, it may be pointed out that even emperor Akbar, who was a contemporary of Tulsi, does not find any mention in Tulsi's works despite the fact that Tulsi gave thought to the subject of rulership and has expressed his notions of sovereignty. For Tulsi, who was disturbed at the *varnasankar* of his times and who advocated a *dharmadhurin* ruler who could apply *niti*, even Akbar did not exist, either an as ideal ruler or as a *mleccha* who opposed *sati* subscribed to by Tulsi. Therefore, to look for evidence regarding the destruction of a temple and the construction of a mosque by the order of Akbar's grandfather in a work written by the order of Akbar, much less in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, or in Tulsi's *bhakti* poetry, amounts to looking for penguins in the Sahara and camels in the Antarctic. Besides, the quotation from the *Ain-i-Akbari* referring to Ayodhya as the residence of Rama has been

cleverly lifted from a longish passage bearing reference to Ayodhya, deliberately concealing the *Ain's* reference to Ayodhya being "a populous site" in "ancient times" and "one of the largest cities of India," (of Akbar's times), as well as Abul Fazl's assertion that "it is esteemed one of the holiest places of antiquity."

Regarding the genesis of the story about the destruction of a temple and the subsequent role of Mrs. Beveridege in its propagation it must be said to her credit that despite the circulation of a story about the destruction of a temple in the 19th century British records, she has not accepted the story as evidence but has drawn an inference of her own, which we may not accept, in a footnote at a very obscure place in her scholarly and voluminous translation of Babur's memoirs.

The statement that "the mosque according to the medieval sources, was not of much religious and cultural significance for the Muslims" is too naive on the part of the historians. Every mosque, whether in use or abandoned, is equally sacred to the Muslims.

The last few paras of the pamphlet are evasive, as they do not concern the Rama Janmabhumi-Babri Masjid controversy but are devoted to mustering "historical evidence" in refutation of a certain "assumption that Muslim rulers were invariably and naturally opposed to the sacred places of the Hindus..." The Muslim rulers chosen as examples for the purpose of the refutation of the "assumption" are the Nawabs of Oudh "whose patronage of Hindu sacred centres was an integral part of the Nawabi mode of exercise of power."

The three pieces of **historical evidence** cited to demonstrate the Muslim Nawab's secularism, liberalism and "patronage" to "Hindu sacred centres" which resulted in "the expansion of Ayodhya as a Hindu pilgrimage centre" are as follows: (a) "The dewan of Nawab Safdarjung built and repaired several temples in Ayodhya;" (b) "Asaf-ud-Daulah's dewan contributed to the building of the temple fortress in Hanuman hill in the city;" and (c) the "Muslim officials of the Nawabi court gave several gifts for the rituals performed by Hindu priests." It may be noted that in the first two evidences the authors have deliberately concealed the facts that both the *dewans* were Hindus. On the contrary, while mentioning about the gifts by the officials of the Nawabi court to Hindu priests (in their third evidence) they have not forgotten to state that the officials were Muslims. This not only amounts to concealment of evidence but also distortion of evidence.

Again, while stating that, "In moments of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim rulers did not invariably support Muslims," the evidence cited to support the above contention is the role of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in a conflict between the Sunni Muslims and the Naga Sadhus in Oudh, without pointing out that the rulers of Oudh were Shias and the genesis of the Oudh kingdom lay in Shia-Sunni rivalry (occasional Shia-Sunni riots in Lucknow being a familiar feature even to this day) at the Mughal court, generally referred to as Irani-Turani rivalry. The neutrality of Wajid Ali Shah in the conflict between the Sunni Muslims and the Naga Sadhus was not necessarily a reflection of his liberal attitude towards the Hindus but could be interpreted as his bias against the Sunni Muslims who were creating trouble for him and whose leader was punished by Wajid Ali Shah by mobilizing "the support of Muslim leaders." Integrity demanded the disclosure of whether the "Muslim leaders" whose support was mobilized to punish "the leader of the Muslim communal forces" were mostly Shias or Sunnis. Similarly, the evidence regarding the presence of Shaivite Nagas (or the Naga Sadhus who as professional fighters were also employed in the armies of the Maratha and Rajput rulers) in the military of the Nawabs of Oudh does not make Oudh a secular state, just as the mere domination of the Indian Army by the Hindus does not make our state a communal state.

Notwithstanding the above distortions, scores, rather hundreds, of instances of the grants of gifts and lands to the Hindu divines and shrines by the Muslim rulers can be cited, as well as, of the destruction of temples. But neither of them will clinch the Rama Janmabhumi-Babri Masjid issue.

All such evidence is evasive about the problem, and apologetic. The real issue is, can our nation afford to revert to the medieval ages to vindicate the misdeeds of the Muslim rulers, in the event of an enthusiast succeeding in proving that the Babri masjid was constructed by demolishing a temple? The authors have rightly pointed out that "attempts to undo past can have dangerous consequences," but a greater danger lies in motivated scholarship aimed at building nationalism and secularism through tailored evidence rather than stating facts in the perspective of the age in which they occurred. Euphemism will not help. It will defeat the very noble cause of the well-intentioned historians, which certainly cannot be achieved through a dubious presentation of "historical evidence." It is this sort of reasoning which weakens the credibility of history and strengthens belief.

The question is not of the historicity of the story of Rama or of the details associated with it. It is a matter of popular belief of the millions through the ages, their sentiments and faith. No mingling of words, apologia, recourse to evidence or polemic will convince those who are wedded to faith rather than reason. The belief of the Hindus in Rama as an *avtar*, or a god, is as strong as the belief of the Muslims in the Quran as a revealed work, as the word of God. Can the said exponents of reason dare talk of evidence on the latter?

It is beliefs, not historical evidence, which are the guiding force in shaping the psyche of individuals, as well as the destinies of societies and nations. It is our belief in the integrity of our country, not the historical evidence, and the faith in a secular state, which will go into the making of our nation, taking the toll of the contemporary historical facts recently witnessed in Meerut, Moradabad, Bhagalpur, Kota, Jaipur and at several other places.

A few historians giving *fatwas* from the pulpit of a prestigious institution distantly located from the masses cannot combat the popular beliefs of the masses nourished through centuries, recently fostered and strengthened through the more popular and powerful media of TV, merely by mustering a few pieces of **evidence** of dubious credibility. No social scientist can afford to ignore popular beliefs in the analysis of a society. What we need is not the evidence in the present crisis but a sympathetic understanding of the beliefs of others, respect for such beliefs and concomitant effort at accommodation and co-existence of incompatible beliefs, rather than attempts to proselytize others to one's beliefs under the garb of "historical evidence." We have to accept what appear to us today to be the follies of our history and live with them. A nation built upon patch-work cannot survive long. What is required is the courage and integrity to accept and own our history, face the truth and set an example of secularism for the building of our nation.

(*Indian Express*, February 25, 1990)

The authors of the pamphlet respond to Dr. Khan's critique.

It is kind of Mr. Khan to concede that our pamphlet entitled, *The Political Abuse of History*, has to be taken cognizance of, even if the reasons which he puts forward for this may not be the most apposite

(*Indian Express*, February 25). Mr. Khan's critique would have been less confusing if the readers of the *Indian Express* had the opportunity to read our pamphlet. He questions our historical method and the evidence we have gathered relating to the historicity of the so-called Ramajanmabhumi. Mr. Khan's misrepresentation of our views on these matters is, we presume, not a deliberate attempt to malign us, but due rather, to an unfortunate lack of familiarity with historical sources and an inability to comprehend the language of our argument.

There is however, in his critique, virtually no discussion of historical method, his criticism focussing on the evidence alone. His own familiarity with the evidence leaves much to be desired. Most historians hesitate to take on the whole gamut of Indian history, each one being inadequately equipped to handle the variety of source material. Even our effort had to be the result of a team, each one qualified in the study of a different category of source. But Mr. Khan rushes in where angels fear to tread.

We are glad to note that he regards it as axiomatic "that there is no evidence to prove that the disputed monument is at the precise site of the birth of the hero of Valmiki's *Ramayana* and that there is no evidence to prove that the mosque in question was built either by demolishing or converting a temple." It is heartening that we are at least in agreement on these essentials.

Mr. Khan goes on to add, "We do not have to muster evidence to prove that there is no evidence." Surely Mr. Khan as a responsible historian entering this discussion, can be expected to be familiar with the arguments of the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the R.S.S. and other such organisations, claiming a historical basis for the site. He seems not to have understood our purpose, which was to contest the assertion that the mosque was built by demolishing the temple specifically marking the birthplace of Rama.

To come to Mr. Khan's specific points. Our statement that according to Valmiki Rama belonged to the *Treta Yuga*, is read by him to mean that we accept that this was so. How he arrives at this conclusion remains a mystery. Nor has he understood that our mention of the lack of habitation in Ayodhya prior to the 8th century B.C. is quite clearly with reference to the *Kaliyuga*, supposed to have begun in 3102 B.C. and not, as he assumes, to the *Treta Yuga*. This point, in our estimation, undermines the rest of his argument.

As regards, the location of Ayodhya and Saketa from early Buddhist sources, the two cannot be equated. In the Buddhist sources Ayodhya and Saketa are different cities. There are two references which place Ayodhya on the Ganges. The Buddha is said to have preached a different and specific *sutta* at Ayodhya on each occasion. The place was therefore important and unlikely to be wrongly located. Half-a-dozen other references from later Buddhist texts mention the name but do not locate the city. We were not concerned with the fewness of references in Buddhist texts, as Mr. Khan assumes, but that Ayodhya and Saketa were distinct. On the evidence which exists it would seem that it was only in the Gupta period that Saketa was identified with Ayodhya. One cannot, therefore, support Mr. Khan's assumption that the later day Ayodhya and that of the Buddhists was the same.

Mr. Khan asserts a popular Rama cult at the time of Skandagupta on the ground that the Gupta king claimed Suryavamsha descent. But in this connection the two need to be differentiated. Firstly, the importance of Rama in Gupta times was as one of the *avataras* in a Vaishnava tradition of worship; his independent status as an object of worship was a subsequent development of a later period. Still later in the 14th-15th centuries A.D., this was promoted by the Ramanandin sect, also encouraging the inclusion of Ayodhya in the circuits of pilgrimage. Secondly, the Suryavamsha lineage is distinct from the Rama cult and was adopted by many ruling families for purposes of political legitimation.

For Mr. Khan to say that there is no evidence for Lumbini from the decades between the death of the Buddha and the inscription of Asoka marking the site as being the birth-place of the Buddha merely shows his lack of familiarity with the many references to Lumbini in that period. This is a distortion of our argument for he overlooks the point which we were making: that the inscription commemorates the village rather than a particular location.

That we did not mention Brahmanical temples when referring to Hsuan Tsang's description of non-Buddhist temples at Ayodhya has an obvious reason: the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang refers to them as "Deva" temples, glossed as non-Buddhist temples. In any case, by the 7th century the term Brahmanical temples has little meaning because temples have to be specified as Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, Jaina, etc.

Turning to the Babri Masjid, Mr. Khan maintains that we have rejected the evidence of the inscription that the mosque was built at the

orders of the emperor Babur. This is amazing. We have nowhere rejected such evidence. What we do question is the claim that the mosque has been constructed at the site of a temple specifically commemorating the birthplace of Rama.

Mr. Khan's next point refers to the gap in Babur's memoirs. This is well-known. There is no way of finding out whether in the missing pages, Babur had referred to either the temple or the mosque in question. One can only point out that the parallel sources, a multiplicity of chronicles as well as texts in the regional languages, are silent on this issue.

Mr. Khan then accuses us of distorting the evidence of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, concealing some parts and highlighting others. He implies that the *Ain* contains contrary bits of information on this point and we have been selective in our choice. We reproduce below the entire passage relating to Ayodhya.

"Awadh (Ayodhya) is one of the largest cities in India. It is situated in longitude 118. 6 and latitude 27. 22. In ancient times its populous site covered an extent of 148 *kos* in length and 36 in breadth, and it is esteemed one of the holiest places of antiquity. Around the environs of the city, they sift the earth and gold is found. It was the residence of Ramachandra, who in the Treta Age combined in his person both the spiritual supremacy and the kingly office." (Translation by Jarrett, II, p. 182).

Of this passage we had reproduced in the pamphlet only the last statement as relevant to our contention that nowhere is there any mention of the erection of a mosque on the site of a temple dedicated to Rama, by the grandfather of the author's patron. Mr. Khan strangely declares this as a 'fallacious' contention, the implication presumably being that Abul Fazl does indeed record the demolition of the temple to give way to the mosque. Given the entire evidence would Mr. Khan care to point out our fallacy? Or else refrain from accusing us of distorting evidence.

Regarding Tulsi Das, it can be only repeated that as a major protagonist of *Rama-bhakti* and as an inhabitant of Awadh, surely in his descriptions of Ayodhya he would have mentioned the Ramajanmabhumi had the place been marked by a temple. This is not the same as his omitting the name of Akbar with whom he was not centrally concerned. It is very noticeable that not only Babur's descendents but even the historical chronicles of the Mughal period, some at least written by

men convinced of the righteousness of actions in the name of Islam, do not refer to any demolition of a temple at the site of the Ramajanmabhumi and the construction of a mosque using the debris of the temple. Some at least among them might have gloried in the deed. This particular silence which cannot be said to arise out of a wish to hide such an event, has therefore, a significance which is not quite reducible to the silence of all the sundry things recalled by Mr. Khan. It does not seem to have occurred to him that different kinds of silences bear different meanings.

Nor is Tulsi's text an isolated example even among Sanskrit and Hindi sources. An 11th century inscription of a Gahadvala ruler records his pilgrimage to Ayodhya and lists the sites at which he performed rituals and offered worship. There is no mention of the Ramajanmabhumi. As is well-known to scholars of early medieval history, there is no mention of the Ramajanmabhumi as a place of pilgrimage in a large number of texts of this period such as those of Lakshmidhara, Mitra Mishra, Jinaprabhasuri, or the Bhushundi *Ramayana* and the *Puranas*, which refer to major places of pilgrimage including Ayodhya. The most important pilgrimage spot at Ayodhya seems to be the Gopratarathirtha, which is located in a different area and has other associations. It would seem that it was in the *Ayodhya-mahatmya* (14th to 16th centuries A.D.), that the Janmasthan was demarcated for the first time and became an important place of pilgrimage. Yet even in this text, it is curious that in the detailed instructions to the pilgrim regarding worship and offerings at the Janmasthan, the benefits of such worship are listed, but there is no mention of a temple at the Janmasthan.

Mr. Khan finds the last paragraphs of our pamphlet, which deal with "the Nawabi mode of exercise of power", evasive, as according to him they do not concern the Ramjanmabhumi-Babri Masjid issue. One way of sustaining the conflict is through a communal representation of Indian history and it has been in this context that our discussion of 19th century Nawabi rule becomes meaningful. We attempted to show that, "Muslim rulers were not **invariably** and **naturally** opposed to the sacred places of Hindus" (emphasis added), that patronage of Hindu sacred centres, not just religious repression, was "an integral part of the Nawabi mode of exercise of power", and that this patronage also helped in the growth of Ayodhya as an important Hindu religious centre.

Mr. Khan accuses us of "concealment" and "distortion" of evidence in arguing the above point. He reminds us that some of the Diwans of the Nawabi court who helped to build Hindu temples at Ayodhya were Hindus, not Muslims. We wish Mr. Khan had cared to read and represent our argument properly. We clearly stated that "Nawabi rule depended on the collaboration of Kayasthas." Through the Hindu officials the Nawabs sought legitimacy among the Hindu populace and hoped to forge links with the Hindu religious institutions. The fact that Kayastha diwans could operate within the Muslim court and make grants to Hindu relgious establishments demonstrates the point we were stressing.

As regards the Hanumangarhi episode, Mr. Khan suggests that we deliberatlely concealed the fact that Wajid Ali Shah's oppositions to Sunni mobilisation in the mid-19th century against the Naga Sadhus was linked to the Shia-Sunni rivalry, and therefore this does not "necessarily reflect his liberal attitude towards the Hindus". In spite of Mr. Khan's assertion, we have nowhere mentioned Wajid Ali Shah's "liberal attitude towards Hindus". Incidentally, we have also not referred to his being "secular". The point we were making was simple: "in moments of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim rulers did not invariably support Muslims"; such situations of conflict in fact show that Hindus and Muslims were not "homogenous communities" always opposed to each other. There was, "hostility between factions and groups within a community as there was amity across communities."

Mr. Khan wants us to "interpret" the Hanumangarhi episode in terms of the Shia-Sunni rivalry. However, a careful reading of the sources would show that many Shia *mujtahids* also supported the Sunni Muslim fight against the Naga Sadhus. It was the growing tension between the communities and the threat to the state, not just the Shia-Sunni rivalry, which motivated Wajid Ali Shah's action against the rioters. And contrary to Mr. Khan's assumption it was not only the Shia leaders who were mobilised by the Nawab against the Sunni rebels, but many Sunni Muslim *ulama* also issued *fatwas* against the leader of the rioters, Maulavi Amir-Ali.

That the Nawabs of Awadh were Shias is common knowledge. But Mr. Khan's assertion that the "genesis of the Awadh kingdom lay in Shia-Sunni rivalry at the Mughal court..., generally referred to as the Irani-Turani rivalry", will come as a surprise to historians of the period. To say that the genesis of the Awadh kingdom lay in the Shia-Sunni

conflict is to overlook the struggle for power among the Shias themselves.

In all this we are not arguing from negative evidence. We are asking the more pertinent question of why, today, are feverish attempts being made to put together something which may pass for authentic evidence to support the historicity of the supposed site of Ramajanmabhumi: in other words, to echo Mr. Khan's own metaphor, why is it that today attempts are being made to insist that the Sahara has penguins and the Antarctic, camels?

Mr. Khan gets us wrong again when he suggests that we are rejecting the significance of belief. We agree with Mr. Khan that no social scientist can afford to ignore the popular beliefs of the masses. But as historians we have also to understand the historical roots of belief, for popular beliefs are not eternal and unchanging; they are constituted and reconstituted within society through social processes. If the long standing belief is simply an association of Ayodhya with Rama then it does not matter where the Ramajanmabhumi temple is built in Ayodhya. But because the present belief is linked to communal politics there is a conflict over the site.

Finally, we would repeat what we have said often enough before, that the destruction or conversion of places of worship, if and when they have occurred in the past, were specific to the political culture of those times. We reject any attempt at recreating that political culture today, irrespective of the historical evidence.

Dr. A.R. Khan replies

In a rejoinder to my critique of the pamphlet entitled, *The Political Abuse of History*, the authors of the pamphlet, speaking from a high pedestal, start by casting aspersions on the author of the critique for what they call the latter's "unfortunate lack of familiarity with historical sources", "inability to comprehend" the language of their argument and an astonishment for the latter's attempts to "take on the whole gamut of Indian history". They do not realise that nothing prevents this author from grappling with evidence outside the field of his specialisation with the help of colleagues who specialise in different areas of Indian history. No assistance from angels is required to check a few references from ancient texts.

When the combined effort of "a team" of 25 "qualified" historians can err in describing Mrs. Beveridge's English translation of the *Babur-nama*, our primary source for the history of Babur's regin, as the **first** translation, we can see that no scholar is immune from error. However, what is interesting is that the tone of the arguments has mellowed down in the rejoinder. It is more in an academic spirit than as a verdict, despite their allegations of misrepresentations on my part.

To begin with, the assertion that their reference to "The lack of habitation in Ayodhya prior to the 8th century B.C." was "**quite clearly** (emphasis added) with reference to the *Kaliyuga* is a shift in their position. It is for any one to see that the words reading "**at this early time**" (empahasis added) in the relevent paragraph refer to nothing else than the *Treta Yuga*, mentioned in the preceding paragraph with empahasis on its antiquity in comparison to *Kaliyuga*. It is only in the context of the refutation of the description of Ayodhya "in the Valmiki *Ramayana*" that a reference to archeological findings is made.

As regards the location of Ayodhya and Saketa there are many scholarly interpretations from archaeological and literary sources (see, for example *Puratattva*, Nos. 7-8 and 11), but the issue is yet to be clinched. What remains to be investigated is whether Buddhist sources mention Ayodhya and Saketa as two different towns at one and the same time, or talk of Ayodhya at one time and Saketa at another; unlike Kalidasa, who in his *Raghuvamsa*, refers to the same town sometimes as Ayodhya and sometimes as Saketa.

On the issue of Rama's worship, the authors contend that "The importance of Rama in Gupta times was as one of the *avataras* in a Vaishnava tradition of worship". As long as Rama's worship had started, it is immaterial whether he was worshipped as an *avatara* of Vishnu or by virtue of "an independent status" of his own. To say that I assert a **popular Rama cult** (emphasis added) is tantamount to stretching my argument which only stressed that "Rama's worship cannot be equated **only** (emphasis added) with the rise of Ramanandi sect", that is, confined to the Ramanandis alone. To this day, Rama is worshipped even by those who are not Ramanandis and most of whom are unable to distinguish between Rama as an *avatara* of Vishnu or as an indepedent god, just as most Muslims who celebrate the two Ids and many other festivals do not know about the origin and significance of these festivals.

Regarding Buddha's birthplace, my reference was not to the precise site but to the village. The only evidence they have cited about "The historical certainty of the birthplace of Buddha" is the Ashokan inscription put up two centuries after Buddha's death.

Passing on to Hsuan Tsang's mention of shrines in Ayodhya: if "the term Brahmanical temples" had "little meaning", as contended in the rejoinder, the term "non-Buddhist temples" has absolutely no meaning. Only if the authors had mentioned. that Hsuan Tsang refers to "Deva" temples, they would have done justice to the evidence, as well as to the "historical method". Further, it is a matter of query whether the Jain temples can also be included in "Deva" temples.

As regards the Baburi Masjid, what made me question their contention was their statement that "except for the verses in Persian on the two sides of the mosque, **there is no other primary evidence to suggest that a mosque had been erected there on Babur's behalf**" (emphasis added). In the absence of any evidence to the contrary or any plausible explanation, the reservation in accepting the contents of a contemporary inscription certainly involves a point of "historical method". On the issue of the gap in the *Baburnama,* they now admit that it is "well known", but regarding their reference to "parallel sources" I may submit that no known contemporary or near contemporary source bears any reference to any developments in Oudh during the period of the gap.

As far as references to the *Ain-i-Akbari* and Tulsi are concerned, though the authors have slightly modified their position by quoting the full passage from the *Ain* highlighting the antiquity and holiness of Ayodhya, I still emphatically reiterate my earlier submission that these are not the sources to look for as evidence on the issue. No statement of mine gives the slightest implication of Abul Fazl recording the demolition of a temple. The argument that "surely in his description of Ayodhya he (Tulsi) would have mentioned the Rama Janmabhumi..." is nothing but a fallacy. "Surely", Tulsi was not composing his poetry to furnish evidence to future historians or to the wishes of the *Bhaktas* of Rama.

On Oudh, sticking to my earlier position that the references to Oudh are evasive, I would, in agreement with the authors' words of wisdom that "different kinds of sliences bear different meanings", submit that their silence about the names of the Hindu Diwans of Oudh, as well as the silence about the gap in the *Baburnama* and the Deva

Temples, can also be constructed as having specific contextual meanings. Had the authors mentioned that even the trusted high officials of the Nawabs of Oudh were Hindus, they would have, perhaps, driven home their point regarding "The Nawabi mode of exercise of power". I would not enter into an academic debate on the other issues about the history of Oudh which are peripheral to the theme of the discussion, as I would also not press for a reply to those questions in my article which are not central to the issue. While broadly agreeing with them that the "Muslim rulers were not invariably and naturally opposed to the sacred places of the Hindus", as a student of history I would refrain from any comment on the nature or innate characteristic of any religion or its followers. To conclude, given the welcome shift in their position in their concluding statement reffirming their objective with the words "irrespective of the evidence", the whole debate initiated in the pamphlet becomes redundant.

(*Indian Express*, April 1, 1990)

Appendix 3

Visākhā, Sāketa, or Ajudhya

by Alexander Cunnigham

Much difficulty has been felt regarding the position of Fa-Hian's "great kingdom of *Shā-chi*" and of Hwen Thsang's *Visākhā*, with its enormous number of heretics or Brahmanists; but I hope to show in the most satisfactory manner that these two places are identical, and that they are also the same as the *Sāketa* and *Ajudhya* of the Brahmans...

I have now to show that Fa-Hian's *Shā-chi* is the same as Hwen Thsang's *Visākhā*, and that both are identical with *Sāketa* or *Ajudhya*. With respect to *Shā-chi*, Fa-Hian relates that "on leaving the town by the *southern gate* you find to the east of the road the place where Buddha bit a branch of the nettle-tree and planted it in the ground, where it grew to the height of the seven feet, and never increased or diminished in size". Now, this is precisely the same legend that is related of *Visākhā* by Hwen Thsang, who says that "to the *south* of the capital, and to the left of the road (that is, to the east as stated by Fa-Hain), there was, amongst other holy objects, an extraordinary tree 6 or 7 feet high, which always remained the same, neither growing nor decreasing". This is the celebrated tooth-brush tree of Buddha, to which I shall have occasion to refer presently. Here I need only notice the very precise agreement in the two descriptions of this famous tree, as to its origin, its height, and its position. The perfect correspondence of these details appears to me to leave no doubt of the identity of Fa-Hian's *Shā-chi* with the *Visākhā* of Hwen Thsang.

With respect to the identification of Visākhā with the Sāketa of the Hindus, I rest my proofs chiefly on the following points; Ist, that *Visākhā*, the most celebrated of all females in Buddhist history, was a resident of Sāketa before her marriage with *Pūrnna Varddhana*, son of *Mrigāra*, the rich merchant of *Śrāvasti* — and 2nd, that Buddha is recorded by Hwen

Thsang to have spent 6 years at *Visākhā*, while, by the Pali annals of Turnor, he is stated to have lived 16 years at Sāketa.

The story of the noble maiden Visākhā is related at great length in the Ceylonese books. According to Hardy, she erected a *Purvvārāma* at *Śrāvastī*, which is also mentioned by Hwen Thsang. Now, there was also a *Purvvārāma* at Sāketa, and it can hardly be doubted that this monastery was likewise built by her. She was the daughter of *Dhananja*, a rich merchant, who had emigrated from *Rājagriha* to *Sāketa*. Now, amongst the oldest inscribed coins which have been discovered only at Ajudhya, we find some bearing the names of *Dhana Deva* and *Visākhā-Datta*. I mention this beacuse it seems to me to show the probability that the family of *Dhanana* and *Visākhā* was of great eminence in Sāketa or Ayodhya; and I infer from the recurrence of their names, as well as from the great celebrity of the lady, that the city may possibly have been called Visākhā after her name.

The other proof which I derive from the years of Buddha's residence is direct and convincing. According to the Ceylonese annals, Buddha was 35 years of age when he attained Buddhahood; he then led a houseless life for 20 years, preaching in various places in Northern India, all of which are detailed; and of the remaining 25 years of his life he spent 9 in the *Jetavana* monastery at Śrāvastī, and 16 in the *Pubbārāma* monastery at Sāketapura. Now, in the Burmese annals these numbers are given as 19 years and 6 years, and in the last figure we have the exact number recorded by Hwen Thsang. Nothing can be more complete than this proof. There were only two places at which Buddha resided for any length of time, namely *Śrāvastī*, at which he lived either 9 or 19 years, and *Sāketa*, at which he lived either 6 or 16 years; and as according to Hwen Thsang he lived for 6 years at Visākhā, which is described as being at some distance to the south of *Śrāvastī*, it follows of necessity that *Visākhā* and *Sāketa* were one and the same place.

The identity of *Sāketa* and *Ayodhya* has, I believe, always been admitted; but I am not aware that any proof has yet been offered to establish the fact. Csoma de Koros, in speaking of the place, merely says "*Saketana* or Ayodhya," and H.H. Wilson, in his Sanskrit Dictionary, called *Sāketa* "the city Ayodhya." But the question would appear to be set at rest by several passages of the 'Rāmāyana' and 'Raghuvansa,' in which *Sāketanagara* is generally called the capital of Raja *Daśaratha* and his sons. But the following verse of the 'Rāmāyana,' which was pointed out to me by a Brahman of Lucknow, will be sufficient to establish the identity.

Aśwajita, father of *Kaikeyī*, offers to give his daughter to *Daśaratha*, Raja of *Sāketanagara*:-

Sāketam nagaram Rājā nāmnā Daśaratho balī.
Tasmai deyā mayā kanyā Kaikeyī nāma to janā

The ancient city of Ayodhya or Sāketa is deseribed in the 'Rāmāyana' as situated on the bank of the *Sarayu* or *Sarju* river. It is said to have been 12 *yojanas*, or nearly 100 miles in circumference, for which we should probably read 12 kos, or 24 miles, — an extent which the old city, with all its gardens, might once possibly have covered. The distance from the *Guptār Ghāt* on the west, to the Rām Ghāt, on the east, is just 6 miles in a direct line, and if we suppose that the city with its suburbs and gardens formerly occupied the whole intervening space to a depth of two miles, its circuit would have agreed exactly with the smaller measurement of 12 kos. At the present day the people point to Rām Ghāt and Guptār Ghāt as the eastern and western boundaries of the old city, and the southern boundry they extend to *Bharat-Kund*, near *Bhadarsā*, a distance of 6 kos. But as these limits include all the places of pilgrimage, it would seem that the people consider them to have been formerly inside the city, which was certainly not the case. In the 'Ayin Akbari,' the old city is said to have measured 148 kos in length by 36 kos in breadth, or, in other words, it covered the whole of the province of Oudh to the south of the Ghāghra river. The 12 *yojanas* of the 'Rāmāyana,' which are equal to 48 kos, being considered too small for the great city of Rāma, the Brahmans simply added 100 kos to make the size tally with their own extravagant notions. The present city of Ajudhya, which is confined to the north-east corner of the old site is just two miles in length by about three quarters of a mile in breadth; but not one half of this extent is occupied by buildings, and the whole place wears a look of decay. There are no high mounds of ruins, covered with broken statues and sculptured pillars, such as mark the sites of other ancient cities, but only a low irregular mass of rubbish heaps, from which all the bricks have been excavated for the houses of the neighbouring city of Faizābād. This Muhammadan city, which is two miles and a half in length by one mile in breadth, is built chiefly of materials extracted from the ruins of Ajudhya. The two cities together occupy an area of nearly six square miles, or just about one-half of the probable size of the ancient capital of Rāma. In Faizābād the only building of any consequence is the stuccoed brick tomb of the old Bhao Begam, whose story was dragged before the public during the famous trial of Warren Hastings. Faizābād was

the capital of the first Nawābs of Oudh, but it was deserted by Asaf-ud-daolah in A.D. 1775.

In the seventh century the city of *Visākhā* was only 16 *li*, or 2-2/3 miles, in circuit, or not more than one-half of its present size, although it probably contained a greater population, as not above one-third or perhaps less of the modern town is inhabited. Hwen Thsang assigns to the district a circuit of 4000 *li*, or 667 miles, which must be very much exaggerated. But, as I have already observed, the estimated dimensions of some of the districts in this part of the pilgrim's route are so great that it is quite impossible that all of them can be correct. I would therefore, in the present instance, read 400 *li*, or 67 miles, and restrict the territory of Visākhā to the small tract lying around Ajudhya, between the Ghāgra and Gomati rivers.

(*The Ancient Geography of India*, Pp.338-43)

Appendix 4

Ram Janmabhoomi: Some More Evidence

By Abhas Kumar Chatterjee

In a pamphlet entitled 'The Political Abuse of History: Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi Dispute' issued by some faculty members of the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, the authors have tried to prove that there is no historical evidence to support the claim that a temple dedicated to Rama in fact stood at the disputed site before Babar had it destroyed to construct the mosque. They have said that this is a myth just as much as the belief that Rama was actually born at that spot.

The pamphlet appeared to bolster the contention of Syed Shahbuddin, who has been proclaiming for some time now that only 19th century British records say that the Babri masjid was built after the demolition of the Janmasthan temple. He has even claimed that if the theory of displacement of the temple by the mosque is proved independently of the British sources, he will himself pull down the mosque.

Since the pamphlet was issued in the name of persons like Romila Thapar, S. Gopal, Bipan Chandra and others who are regarded as respectable intellectuals and scholars, it has been taken seriously by many readers. It has created doubts in the mind of some people whether the Hindu claim is indeed based on sound historical facts.

To take first things first, the question whether Lord Rama was born at this spot, or was born at all, is irrelevant. Items of religious belief are essentially matters of faith and not of history, in Hinduism as much as in other religions of the world. The existence of God, which is the fountainhead of most religions is itself a myth. It cannot be proved by history. Indeed, as Kurt Godel, the German mathematician showed, throwing the Catholic Church into turmoil in the Thirties, in every

axiomatic system, there is always a proposition which can neither be proved nor disproved.

The world respects the myths on which the faith of other religions rest. Take, for example, the Christian belief that Christ was born of a virgin mother, or that he was the son of God, or that he rose from his grave three days after his death to go to heaven. Can any of these propositions be proved by historical evidence ? Similarly, can it be proved by any historical evidence that the contents of the Koran were actually revealed to prophet Mohammed by Allah as Muslims all over the world so passionately believe? But Muslims and Christians the world over expect, and rightly so, that these myths be held in due respect.

Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses' merely suggested that the contents of the Koran may not really have been revelations by Allah, and we have seen the indignation and vengeance with which Muslims have reacted all over the world. And that when it was only an allusion to Islam, in a mere dream sequence, of a world of fantasy, created in an avowedly fictional work.

To the Hindu, the life and deeds of Rama are as true as some of the notions cited above. The faith of the Hindus has as much right to respect as of other religious groups. Historians should not, therefore, step beyond what can be described as their jurisdiction by seeking to test the Hindu's faith by the yardsticks of historical evidence.

As for the demolition of the temple for building the mosque, a good deal has been written in these columns (A. R. Khan, 25 Feb. and Harsh Narain, 26 Feb.) pointing out some of the flaws and concealments in the arguements of the pamphlet, and quoting independent Muslim sources which show that a temple was destroyed to raise a mosque. In the following paragraphs, we give some more evidence which may serve to further remove the unwarranted doubts created by the pamphet.

Joseph Tieffenthaler (1710-1785), a Jesuit priest of Austrian origin, lived in India for a long time. He toured the Oudh region extensively between 1766 and 1771. He wrote an elaborate historical and geographical account of India in Latin. The account contains a description of Ayodhya. Joseph Bernoulli, the noted French scholar, published a French translation of Tieffenthaler's book (*Description Historique et Geographique de L' Inde*) in 1786. This account is totally independent of British records and is much older than the oldest British account of the Janmabhoomi temple recorded by Montgomery Martin

in 1838. This is what Tieffenthaler has to say about the temple-masjid site:

"The emperor Aurengzeb destroyed the fortress called Ramkot, and built at the same place a Mohammedan temple with three domes. Others say that it has been built by Babar. One can see 14 columns made of black stone five spans in height which occupy the site of the fortress. 12 of these columns now support the inner arcades of the mosque, two of the 12 are placed at the entrance of the cloister. Two others form part of the tomb of a Moor. It is said that these columns , rather the pieces of columns, which have engravings by craftsmen, have been brought from Lanka or Selendip island which Europeans call Ceylon, by Hanuman, the king of monkeys.

"On the left one can see a square box elevated five inches above the ground level covered with limestone, five aunes (sic) long and 4 aunes (sic) wide. The Hindus call it Bedi which means a crib. This is because here existed a house in which Besschan (Vishnu) was born in the form of Rama and where it is said his three brothers were also born. Subsequently, Aurengzeb, or according to some other people Babar, destroyed the place in order to prevent the heathens from practising their superstition. But they have continued to practise their religious ceremonies in both places, knowing this to have been the birthplace of Rama, by going around it three times and prostrating on the ground. The two areas are surrounded with a crenellated wall. One can enter the front room through a small door in the middle.

"Not far from here there is a place where people dig to find grains of black rice converted into small stones which people say have been lying hidden in the ground since the days of Rama.

"On the 24th of the month of Chait, a great gathering of people takes place here to celebrate the birthday of Rama and this fair is famous all over India." (brackets mine)

Tieffenthaler was obviously uncertain whether the mosque was constructed by Aurangzeb or by Babar. But that question is well settled by the inscription in the mosque which clearly says that it was built under Babar's orders in A.D. 1528 by Mir Baqi who had been appointed by Babar as the governor of Oudh. Tieffenthaler has also made a minor mistake in saying that the two black stone columns used at the entrance are "of the 12" used for supporting the inner arcades of the mosque. Actually, these are in addition. The rest of his narrative, however, tells us conclusively that this is not a "story circulated by 19th

century British records" as the authors of the pamphlet would like us to believe. Specially significant is the fact that Tieffenthaler had found the Hindus to have reoccupied "both the places" is the mosque as well as the courtyard in front of it, by the middle of the 18th century.

After describing a few more spots like Swargadwara, Naval Rai's Ghats etc., Tieffenthaler says the following about another important shrine, the kitchen of Sita:

"But an even more famous place is the one called *Sita ki rasoi*, that is, the kitchen of Sita, the wife of Rama. This place is adjacent to the city at the centre on a high ground."

The writings of some Muslims authors, like Mirza Rajab Ali Beg (*Fasana-i-Ibrat*) mention the mosque as having been built at the site of "*Sita ki rasoi*" shrine instead of the Janmabhoomi. This apparent puzzle is well explained by researchers like Hans Bakker (*Ayodhya*, 1984) who have concluded that through "gradual expansion of the temple complex" the Janmabhoomi "might have developed from a simple temple to a block containing several subsidiary shrines...the kitchen of Sita presumably formed a part of the Janmasthan temple complex before its devastation".

According to Ayodhyā-Mahātmya, "*Janmasthānād vāyukoṇe pākasthānam tu kathyate*" (the kitchen of Sita is situated in the north-west corner of the Janmasthan). Today, a simple shrine is erected within the enclosure of the mosque of Babar in its northwest corner. "Before its destruction, the *Sitā pakāsthāna* was presumably a subsidiary shrine in the northwest corner of the Janmasthan precincts."

The new Janmasthan temple, constructed after the destruction of the original shrine, north of the mosque, also contains a shrine of Sita's kitchen in the northwest part of the building.

The 14 carved Hindu stone pillars used in Babar's mosque, which the authors of the pamphlet conveniently omitted to mention, are a conclusive proof that material obtained by destroying a Hindu temple, or palace, had been used in building the mosque, but no historian or traveller, Muslims included, has said till this day which other Hindu edifice Babar destroyed to obtain these materials.

That a Janmasthan temple existed in the Ramkot is equally well proved by the ancient Sanskrit text of Ayodhyā Mahātmya, which is part of the *Skanda Purāṇa* composed centuries before the invasion of Babar. It eulogises the glory of the Janmasthan as the holiest of holy spots in Ayodhya and describes the virtues of worshipping at this

shrine, specially on Ramnavami day. Several other holy spots described in it, such as Swargadwar, Goptarghat, Maniparvat etc. are still extant or can be precisly located. But the temple of Janmasthan admittedly does not exist on the ground any more. No one tells us where this temple was, and where it went.

The position we thus come to is this. The holy Janmabhoomi temple, which once stood in Ramkot disapppears. Pillars of a destroyed Hindu temple are used to construct a mosque under Babar's orders in Ramkot at a spot surrounded by scores of other shrines associated with Rama. Hindus claim all along that this was the site of the temple. Inspite of the efforts of Mughal rulers to keep them out, they reoccupy the site and continue to offer worship there. Great gatherings of people continue to be held here to celebrate Ramnavami. They defend the shrine against Muslim attacks in violent clashes as in 1853, when 70 Muslims making a bid to recapture the temple, are killed and are buried in the nearby 'ganj shaheedan'.

Neither Muslim rulers nor anyone else ever point out any other spot to have been the site of the Janmabhoomi temple, let alone explain why Hindus should have taken the unusual step abandoning such a holy site and laid claim to a spurious new site in direct confrontation with the might of the Mughal emperors. For at least two and a half centuries, all travellers (Tieffenthaler 1766-71), surveyors (Martin 1838, Carnegie 1870, Neville 1905), archaeologists (Cunningham 1862-4, Fuhrer 1891), historians (Beveridge 1922) and scholars (Hans Bakker 1984) find the available evidence to leave no doubt that Babar's mosque was constructed by demolishing the Janmabhoomi temple which stood at the site and using its debris.

But Romila Thapar, Syed Shahabuddin, S. Gopal et al now tell us that they find 'no evidence'. One wonders what kind of evidence would satisfy them. Or, what kind of evidence they depend on in their other exercises of history.

Queen Elizabeth House
21, St. Giles
Oxford, UK.

(A slightly edited version of this article was published in the *Indian Express*, New Delhi, on March 27, 1990, under the title "Ram Janmabhoomi: More Evidence")

More evidence: Syed Shahabuddin

Sir: This refers to Mr. A. K. Chatterjee's article 'Ram Janmabhoomi: More evidence' (IE, March 27). The Hindu faith in the divinity of Rama or in Ayodhya being the city of Rama is not in question. What is in question is the identification of his birth-site in Ayodhya with the site of Babri Masjid out of a score of possible and variously claimed sites in Ayodhya itself. Ayodhya was for long a Buddhist and a Jain centre. It has also been a centre of Islamic learning and piety since the 12th century. One hopes it is not anyone's case that all traces of other religions be erased to establish Ayodhya as an exclusive Hindu domain. There are, I may add, about 200 mosques and Muslim shrines in Ayodhya, apart from ancient graveyards, not to speak of Buddhist and Jain remains.

As for the Quran, may I add for Mr. Chatterjee's illumination that there is contemporary evidence about the circumstances and occasion of the revelation of every verse in the Quran? A clear distinction was made between what was revealed by God unto Mohammed (the Quran) and what was said by him (Hadith).

Assuming the quotations to be an exact and authoritative translation from Latin to French and then to English, the account itself refers to the destruction by Aurangzeb or Babar of a fortress called Ramkot and not of a temple. Also 'Bedi' which may perhaps be identified with the present Ram Chabootra, was regarded as the birthplace. Chatterjee's claim that 'both places' refer to Babri Masjid and Bedi finds no support in the text. It does not stand to reason that both the mosque and its courtyard within the same enclosure could be regarded as birth-sites at the same time.

Mr. Chatterjee mentions the existence of the Ram Janamsthan temple, north of the mosque. Indeed, it is the second oldest Ram Mandir in the country, constructed in the 16th century after the cult of Rama became popular. However, by calling it 'new', Mr. Chatterjee tries to establish that an old temple existed which was destroyed. No such conclusion can be drawn either from Tieffenthaler's account nor from Ayodhya Mahatmya nor from any other part of the Skanda Purana. A question arises in my mind, whether Tieffenthaler noted the existence of the Ram Janmasthan Mandir (he could not have overlooked it) and whether 'both places' means this Mandir and the 'Bedi'.

Mr. Chatterjee is not perhaps aware that Prof. Sushil Srivastava and his team from Allahabad tried to locate the Janmasthan according

to the directions in the Skanda Purana and identified several sites, none of which coincides with the Babri Masjid. Even if a site is believed to be Janmasthan, this does not automatically imply the existence of a mandir on the site.

The use of architectural elements of older origin in any structure does not prove that an existing structure in situ was demolished. Recycling of construction material salvaged from a nearby site or debris takes place even today.

Mr. Chatterjee is not aware that the clashes in 1855-56 (not 1853) were not over the Babri Masjid but over Masjid Qanati said to have been constructed by Aurangzeb and alleged to have been subsequently incorporated in the Hanuman Garhi during the Nawabi period.

The only evidence which would be historically satisfactory would be the contemporary evidence of the construction of a temple, when it was constructed, and its existence during the period it is said to have existed (between 4th century AD and 1528 when it is said to have been demolished.)

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

14, Janpath
NEW DELHI-1
March 28
(*Indian Express*, New Delhi, April 9, 1990)

Ram Janmbhoomi : More Evidence

by Abhas Kumar Chatterji

In his letter published in the columns of this newspaper, Mr Syed Shahabuddin (9.4.90) has raised some doubts about the arguments in my article. This rejoinder aims at removing these doubts.

Mr. Shahabuddin has again sought to confuse the issue by his remark, "what is in question is the identification of his (Rama's) birthplace in Ayodhya". One can only repeat that the birthplace of Rama, either historical or mythological, is *not* the question, let alone its identification. The only question is whether or not Babar destroyed what the Hindus called the Janmabhoomi temple in order to construct the Babri mosque.

The number of mosques and tombs in Ayodhya which Mr. Shahabuddin cites is of little relevance. It is true that Ayodhya has a number of them standing, unfortunately, in many cases on the site of Hindu,

Buddhist and Jain shrines destroyed by Mohammedan conquerors. The Swargadwar mosque and the Treta ka Thakur mosque were built by Aurangzeb after demolishing Hindu shrines of the same name dedicated to Rama. The ancient Jain temple of Adinath was destroyed by Maqdoom Shah Jooran Ghori, a commander of Mohammed Ghori, who later had his own tomb built on top of the ruins of Adinath, which survives till this day as Shah Jooran ka Tila. Two tombs attributed to Paigambers Sis and Ayub (i.e. patriarchs Seth and Job) occupy the site where the extraordinary "toothbrush" tree of Buddha had once stood, according to Fa Hien and Huen Tsang, having grown out of a twig discarded by Buddha after brushing his teeth.

Such examples abound. But as we are not discussing the role of different religions in the life of Ayodhya in general, examples of "Islamic learning and piety" and number of Muslim shrines is hardly of any relevance.

As for the Koran, Mr. Shahabuddin says there is contemporary evidence about the "circumstances and occasion of the revelation" of every verse in the Koran. Such vagueness, I am afraid, won't do. Is there any independent historical evidence that these verses were *revealed by Allah himself* to Mohammad ?. If Mr. Shahabuddin has such evidence, he would do yeoman service to the world community by revealing it so as to settle the nagging doubts in the minds of millions of people that these verses may, after all, have been nothing more than the expression of thoughts of a human mind attributed to Almighty God merely for political, and occasionally personal, convenience.

Regarding the main issue, namely, evidence to establish the existence of a temple at the disputed site before construction of the mosque, I had posed a set of questions, answers to which would inescapably lead to an affirmative conclusion. Mr. Shahabuddin is totally silent on these questions. In the absence of any answer to these, the conclusions drawn by me remain uncontroverted.

Tieffenthaler has made clear and specific assertions more than once that "formerly there existed here a house in which Vishnu was born in the form of Rama"; that Aurangzeb (or Babar) "destroyed the place" and that the latter "destroyed the Ramkot fortress" to erect a mosque "at the same place". Yet Mr. Shahabuddin insists that the account does not lead to the conclusion that an existing temple was destroyed. I leave it to the reader to judge.

According to Mr. Shahabuddin, the use of 14 stone pillars of an erstwhile Hindu temple in the construction of the mosque (which he calls "recycling of construction material") does not prove that any temple was demolished. We wonder what else it does prove. Is he suggesting that the temple lay demolished by some unknown hands with its pillars scattered around the site, and Mir Baqi only collected them, under Babar's orders, to construct the mosque ? If Tieffenthaler and all subsequent scholars are to be believed, Babar destroyed the fortress and the temple. But if Mr. Shahabuddin is to be believed, Babar did not use the stone pillars from the shrines he destroyed, but only the broken pillars he found lying in nearby sites from before ! The reader may judge the worth of this argument for himself.

Mr. Shahabuddin's comment that Tieffenthaler mentions the destruction of the Ramkot fortress and not the temple can only be replied to by saying that the whole of the latter's two paragraphs extracted in my article should be read together instead of just one clause of a single sentence. It may also be recalled that on all historical accounts Ramkot was a large citadel with 20 bastions (named after different generals of Rama) and Janmabhoomi was only a part of it (along with seven other palaces and temples), standing on the western rampart of the fortress. To say that Babar destroyed the whole cannot possibly mean that he spared the part. A more reasonable conclusion will be that he destroyed more than just the Janmabhoomi temple.

Mr. Shahabuddin's surmise that by 'both places' Tieffenthaler could have meant the new Janmasthan temple and the Ram Chabootara is quite wrong. He has obviously missed the latter's description of the Sita ki Rasoi (which is the same as the new Janmasthan temple) that was quoted in my article. From the context, one is left in no doubt that by 'both places' Tieffenthaler meant the structure of the mosque and the Ram Chabootra in its courtyard. The reference to the low crenellated wall surrounding the two places with a small front door entrance rules out the inclusion of the new Janmasthan temple in 'both places'.

Mr. Shahabuddin is equally wrong to imagine that the name 'new Janmasthan temple' is my creation. He is evidently unaware that this is the accepted common nomenclature for that shrine used by scholars like Hans Bakker. To quote the latter, "a new Janmasthan temple was built due north of the mosque of Babar...the original shrine would have contained kitchen utensils of stone like the present shrines, one within

the enclosure of the mosque and the other in the new Janmasthan temple".

In his anxiety to dispute the existance of the original Janmabhoomi temple, Mr. Shahabuddin has attributed to the new Janmasthan shrine a thoroughly undeserved distinction of being the second oldest Rama temple of the country. He is obviously not aware of the shrine dedicated to Rama on the Ramagiri hill in the fifth century by the Vakataka king of Deccan, known today as Ramtek near modern Nandardhan, 30 km. northeast of Nagpur, or the 11th C. Ambamata temple at Sien near Jodhpur in Rajasthan, or the 12th century Rajivlochan temple at Rajim at the confluence of rivers Pairi and Mahanadi in Raipur district, or the Kastara temple near Mukundpur 15 km. south of Rewa in MP constructed by the Kalachoori chieftain Malaysingha in 1193 AD. The Janmabhoomi temple destroyed by Babar may have been one of the oldest Rama temples because its kasouti columns used in the mosque have been dated by archaeologists to the 11th century.

Compared to such old shrines dedicated to Rama, the new Janmasthan temple is a relatively recent one, constructed by a devotee called Ramdasji, as close as possible to the site of the destroyed original shrine, in the late first half of the 18th century when, under the patronage of Naval Rai, the Hindu minister of the then Sultan of Awadh, Safdar Jung, a new resurgence of restoration of holy places took place in Ayodhya.

Mr. Shahabuddin says that the clashes of 1855 were not over Babri masjid. This is what H. R. Neville's account has to tell us:

"The desecration of the most sacred spot in the city caused great bitterness between Hindus and Mussalmans. On many occasions the feeling led to bloodshed, and in 1855 an open fight occurred, the Mussalmans occupying the Janmasthan in force and thence making a desperate assault on the Hanuman Garhi. They charged up the steps of the temple but were driven back with considerable loss. The Hindus then made a counter attack and stormed the Janmasthan at the gate of which 75 Mussalmans were buried, the spot being known as the Ganj Shaheedan or the martyrs' resting place" (Faizabad District Gazetteer, 1905, p.168).

Finally, it is clear that Mr. Shahabuddin has considerably shifted his position. He had earlier been saying that there is no evidence independent of 19th century official records of the British. He is even reported to have said that if the demolition of the temple is established

by such evidence he would himself take the lead in pulling down the present structure at the site. Apparently taking a cue from him, Mr. Qureishi, Secretary All India Muslim Personal Law Board, wrote (13.3.90):

"The protagonists of the Ram Janmabhoomi have been asked to produce any historical evidence, not only independent of the British sources but also of the period prior to the advent of the 19th century.... They can cite any writing, document, travelogue, memoir, lyrics, devotional songs or inscriptions."

Faced with precisely the evidence they wanted cited, Mr. Shahabuddin has now shifted his position. For him now only "contemporary evidence of the construction of a temple, *when* it was constructed, would be satisfactory". Obviously Mr. Shahabuddin has taken refuge behind a patently untenable demand.

Queen Elizabeth House
21, St . Giles
Oxford UK.

(This rejoinder was published in the Letters to the Editor column of *Indian Express*, New Delhi, in a slightly edited form on 2nd May, 1990 under the title "The Temple and the Mosque").

The basic issue

Sir: The rejoinder by Mr. Abhas Chatterjee (IE, May 2) confuses the basic issue.

The basic issue in the Ayodhya dispute is not the divinity of Rama, or the belief about Ayodhya being Ramanagri but the claim by the VHP that the one and the only true birth-site of Rama is the site of the inner sanctum of the Babri Masjid. This is the only reason, the VHP says, why the Muslims must hand over the mosque so that Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir can be built with its 'garbhagriha' on that very site. According to the VHP, hundreds of historic mosques in the country were built on the site of pre-existing temples after demolishing them but the Hindus would be satisfied, if the Muslims gracefully surrendered three mosques, and forgive their sins and forget the past!

Mr. Chatterjee's concern is somewhat different: he wishes to prove that a temple was demolished to construct Babri Masjid on its site.

Now, to prove the existence of any structure, there should be some contemporary evidence of its construction and of its continued existence from the time of construction to the time of demolition. Mr. Chatterjee has made his task easier by dating the columns (and by implication, the temple) to the 11th century and not to Vikramaditya (either 50 B.C. or 6th Century AD). So now we have to confine ourselves to the five centuries only, the 11th to the 16th, when Babri Masjid was constructed. By one stroke he has also explained, why the magnificent Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir was not seen by Fa Hian or Huen Tsang and why it was not a landmark of Buddhist Ayodhya.

It is here that the Muslim conquest and occupation of Ayodhya and its development as a centre of Islamic learning and piety (howsoever scornfully Mr. Chatterjee may treat them on account of his inherent bias and prejudice) becomes relevant. Ayodhya was under attack by the Afghans throughout the 11th and the 12th century and was finally taken in 1194 AD. Assuming that the local dynasty had constructed a temple on the site where Babri Masjid stands (although such constructions are normally undertaken in peacetime and not in wartime, and in the hinterland and not in the frontier regions of a kingdom), how did the mandir survive the 'fanatical zeal' of the Afghans and the Turks for nearly 350 years ?

There is no evidence — traveller's accounts, historical record, inscription or literature — to prove that such a temple on the heights of Ramkot existed during this period. No one saw it and no one has described it.

What does the use of Hindu pillars in Babri Masjid prove ? It does not prove that a temple existed on that site; or that it was demolished and the pillars were saved to be used in the new construction. A structure may have existed elsewhere and may have been in ruins due to the passage of time. It may not be a religious structure at all but a secular structure as the East India Company traveller Montgomery Martin thought in early 19th century. Even if these pillars came from a temple *in situ*, how does Mr. Chatterjee jump to the conclusion that the temple was Ram Janmabhoomi Temple ? The very dimensions of the pillars (5-6 feet high) negate such an assumption because such small pillars cannot support a big structure. In fact, the pillars are devoid of any Rama motif. *The presence of the pillars, therefore, merely proves that material from an older structure was used in building the Masjid and nothing more, nothing less.*

Mr. Chatterjee speaks of the 'historical accounts' relating to Ramkot Fortress. Will he please enlighten us about the earliest historical account that he is referring to ? As regards the destruction of the temple when the fortress was taken, he has not followed any reasoning. A fortress is taken and destroyed; whether it is destroyed wholly or only partly does not automatically follow from the fact of destruction. Conquerors did not generally destroy the forts they took; simply because they wished to keep it for their use. Now assuming as Mr. Chatterjee does that the Ramkot Fortress was *wholly* destroyed (it may be kept in view that Babar took it not from a Hindu Raja, as in the case of Gwalior or Chanderi, but from the Muslim Lodis) and, therefore, the Ram Janmabhoomi temple was destroyed by Babar. Now a temple could have been destroyed if it existed. So far Mr. Chatterjee has failed to prove that it existed at that point in time. If it did not exist, it could not be destroyed.

Quoting Tieffenthaler does not help Mr. Chatterjee. A traveller who confuses Babar with Aurangzeb, two centuries apart, would only be recording local legend which, as I accept, had grown after Ayodhya emerged as the centre of the cult of Rama and which was subsequently recorded by the British Gazetteers. By Mr. Chatterjee's own admission, Ram Janmasthan Mandir existed at the time of Tieffenthaler's visit. How could he have missed it ? This controversy can only be resolved by reference to the exact original text and not from a double translation of doubtful accuracy. Mr. Chatterjee has not even yet disclosed the source of the account.

Mr. Chatterjee has mentioned the names of some 'Rama temples' in the country which are said to be much older than Ram Janmasthan Mandir in Ayodhya. I hope he knows the distinction between a Vishnu Mandir and a Ram Mandir. The Mahant of the Ram Janmasthan Mandir, Ayodhya, as well as Swami Akshay Brahmachari claim that this mandir is the second oldest mandir in the country with Lord Ram as the presiding deity.

Once again Mr. Chatterjee makes the totally untenable claim that the conflict of 1855 was over possession of Babari Masjid. He has based himself on the capsule version of Mr. Neville but I have read the detailed accounts of that period including dispatches by the British officers on the spot, to the Company. Even if he reads his own quotation carefully he would find that Neville refers to the alleged destruction of Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir as the source of Hindu-Muslim tension but

not as the cause de guerre. When he comes to the actual conflict, he mentions the assault *by the Muslims* on Hanumangarhi (which was to retrieve a mosque) and not to any assault, but to a *counter-attack by the Hindus* on the Babri Masjid, which was being used as a base by the Muslims. The very fact that the Muslims killed were buried at the very gate of the Babri Masjid shows that there was no dispute about the title or possession of the Babri Masjid. Otherwise the Bairagis would not have permitted it or withdrawn from the Masjid.

I have not shifted my position. To prove that a structure was demolished, one has to prove first that it was constructed and that it continued to exist right up to the time when it is said to have been demolished. *No such evidence from 11th to the 16th century is available. Even from the 16th century right up to the 20th century (1949), there is no claim by a responsible Hindu organisation or institution or individual on Babri Masjid.* All subsequent claims only cite the British Gazetteers which are indeed based on the propaganda by the British during the war of attrition against the Nawab (not Sultan) of Awadh whose purpose was to incite the Hindus of Awadh and thus destabilise the kingdom and which crystallised in the form of Carnegie's Historical Survey which serves as the source for all later Gazetteers.

As for Mr. Chatterjee's reference to the Holy Quran, he fails to see the difference between the spiritual process of 'revelation' and the physical process of human birth. By their very nature the two call for different types of historic evidence. What is comparable, indeed, is the Muslim faith in the divine origin of the Quran and the Hindu faith in the divinity of Rama. But the latter belief is not in question in the Ayodhya dispute.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

14, Janpath
NEW DELHI-1
May 4
(*Indian Express*, New Delhi, May 12, 1990)

Babri Debate

Sir: The counter-rejoinder of Mr. Syed Shahabuddin (12 May 90) to my article on the Rama Janmabhoomi obliges me to make the following comments:

Mr. Shahabuddin has tried to widen the scope of the debate by bringing in questions of the V.H.P.'s stand on the dispute, architectural plan of V.H.P.'s proposed temple, location of its sanctum sanctorum and so on. These issues are beyond the scope of my article which only sought to disprove the fallacious thesis propounded in the phamplet of Romila Thapar and others that destruction of the ancient temple by Babur is only a myth, 'a story circulated by the British' in their '19th century official records'.

Regarding Muslim shrines in Ayodhya, Mr. Shahabuddin has not pointed out any inaccuracy in the historical data presented by me. yet he accuses me of "inherent bias and prejudice". Is it bias to cite facts that may disagree with his imaginary perceptions ?

Mr. Shahabuddin is probably the only person in the world to contemptuously reject the remarkable travelogue of Tieffenthaler as a 'mere record of local legends'. And he does so merely because the latter recorded the fact that the destruction of the Janmabhoomi was attributed by some people to Babur and by others to Aurangzeb !

Without reading the original Latin text or the French translation Mr. Shahabuddin has rejected the English version as being of 'doubtful accuracy'. Would he please point out the inaccuracies ?

I quoted Tieffenthaler's description of the new Janmasthan (Sita Ki Rasoi) temple in my article. Mr. Shahabuddin missed it and asked in his last letter whether Tieffenthaler had noted this temple. In my rejoinder I again drew his attention to this description. But Mr. Shahabuddin still insists on missing this description and charges Tieffenthaler of missing the temple !

I had given complete reference of Tieffenthaler's account in my article, but Mr. Shahabuddin imagines the source to be undisclosed. Let me therefore repeat the source: "Description Historique et Geographique de L' Inde" by Joseph Tieffenthaler, translated by Jean Bernouli, Tome I, Nouvelle Edition, A Berlin MDCCL XXXXI.

Mr. Shahabuddin (amazingly) argues that the Janmabhoomi temple could not have been there for had it been there, the Muslim rulers would have surely destroyed it between 1194 and 1528 A.D. I concede Mr. Shahabuddin's suggestion that many Muslim rulers displayed unprecedented "fanatic zeal" by destroying thousands of large and small Hindu temples all over India. But no historian has ever advanced the ridiculous hypothesis that *every single* Hindu temple was demolished at the earliest opportunity by the first Muslim ruler who came to

power in the area. History is replete with instances of famous Hindu temples like those at Kashi, Mathura, Hardwar, Ayodhya, and Delhi which were destroyed by Aurangzeb late in the seventeenth century. How had these temples survived the earlier Muslim rulers ? Is Mr. Shahabuddin saying that these temples could never have existed because if they had they would have been destroyed before Aurangzeb's time ? The simple historical fact is that many Hindu shrines survived Muslim rule for varying periods until they were *eventually* destroyed and some escaped destruction till the end.

Regarding the Janmasthan pillars used in the Babri mosque, Mr. Shahabuddin argues on a wrong premise that the pillars are (and originally were) only 5-6 feet high. On all accounts the pillars are 7-8 feet high and presumably they are only pieces of the original columns (ref., for example, Tieffenthaler). In any case, why should the pillars have been too inadequate to support the temple when they have been quite adequate to support the mosque ?

As to the absence of 'Rama motifs' on the pillars, Mr. Shahabuddin is probably unaware that Hindu temples do not necessarily bear on their pillars carvings of the presiding deity of that very temple. He need only visit a few temples like the Meenakshi (Madurai), Padmanabh (Trivandrum), Jagannath (Puri), and Lingaraj (Bhubaneshwar) to realize this.

The pillars used in the Babri mosque are carved at the base with a pot (*purna-kalash*) held up by four *yakshas* with overhanging creepers from which a decorative lotus rises up. On the octagonal sides of some of the pillars is carved a female figure in *tribhanga* pose, evidently representing an *apsara* or *devakanya* (some of them have been badly mutilated). The sculpture strongly suggests that the pillars belonged to a temple. Since Mr. Shahabuddin thinks otherwise and suggests that "a structure may have existed elsewhere" which provided the pillars for the mosque, why doesn't he tell us what was the structure and where had it existed ? Why does he not answer the questions raised in my article ?

Indeed, in the background of all other supporting evidence and circumstances, the Hindu pillars used in the Babri mosque can lead to only one conclusion, viz. that the temple at site was destroyed and its material was used to build the mosque.

Mr. Shahabuddin brushes aside Neville's account of Hindu-Muslim clash over the Janmabhoomi shrine in 1855. One may therefore point out that Carnegie's report (1870) and the old Oudh Gazetteer (1875)

published only 15 and 20 years after the incident gives substantially the same account proving that the Muslims first took forcible possession of the Janmasthan and then attacked Hanumangarhi, but Hindus repelled them, counter-attacked and recaptured the Janmasthan at the third attempt, losing 11 of their men. Shah Ghulam Hussain, leader of the Muslim attackers, escaped with a few followers jumping over the walls of the Janmasthan leaving behind their 70 (or 75) dead. Contemporary accounts do not show that the Hindus withdrew from the shrine after this clash, rather the dead Muslims were buried near the Janmasthan gate by the Hindus themselves, under the guidance of the Naib Kotwal Nazir Hussain.

It is true that the immediate cause of the 1855 clash was the Muslims' claim to offer prayer at Hanumangarhi where Aurangzeb had once desecrated the temple and used its materials to build an enclosure for Muslim prayers (the enclosure had since fallen in ruins). But the actual spark of the clash was provided by the Muslims' attempt to bring a wooden gate and fix it in the inner compound wall of the Janmasthan. When the Hindus prevented it on the way, the Muslims attacked Hanumangarhi.

In the face of all these facts, it is curious for Mr. Shahabuddin to claim that there was no dispute and no fight over the Janmasthan temple in 1855.

Mr. Shahabuddin makes yet another wrong assumption that the ancient Rama sanctuaries mentioned by me were actually Vishnu temples. I repeat for his knowledge that they are Rama shrines as such. Had I to cite examples of Vishnu temples only, I could have cited hundreds including Chandrahari, Vishnuhari, Dharmahari, Harismriti, and Chakra-tirtha within Ayodhya itself.

Mr. Shahabuddin is all wrong about Ramkot. Statements like 'the fortress was taken' and 'Babur took the fortress from Muslim Lodis' betray his misconception that in 1528 Ramkot was still an operative fortress serving a military purpose, a citadel that Babur had to capture and which he could have put to strategic use. As a matter of fact, Ramkot would have been no more than a shadow of its past glory by the time of Babur's invasion, the remnants of an impressive old citadel in a poor state of preservation, mainly of religious value to the Hindus. The basic point is that to say that Babur destroyed the Ramkot fortress cannot possibly be taken to mean that he did not destroy the Janmasthan temple because the former included the latter.

Even so, if Mr. Shahabuddin wishes to see description of Ramkot, he may see Ayodhya Mahatmya (Ramnarayanadas edition, 4th Chapter, verses 1-29) and Carnegie's report (p.7).

Mr. Shahabuddin has failed to produce *any* evidence to prove the divine origin of the contents of the Koran. After his earlier claim that there is contemporary evidence to prove it, he now evades the issue by merely saying that 'different types of historical evidence' is called for to test the myths of Muslim and Hindu faiths. One fails to see why. Nevertheless I do not like to embarrass him further by pressing this point, for all I had argued in my article was that such myths form the basis of almost all the religions of the world and should be held in equal respect.

Mr. Shahabuddin has now taken shelter even more firmly behind utterly untenable demands. Instead of the pre-19th century independent (non-British) evidence, he now wants eye-witness accounts, 11th-16th century writings, evidence of claim by a 16th-19th century 'responsible Hindu organization (VHP ?) and so on. Clearly, no evidence would ever be good enough for him. It is not evidence that is wanting but an open mind that can accept it.

A.K. CHATTERJEE

Queen Elizabeth House,
21, St. Giles
Oxford, UK.
June, 5
(*Indian Express*, New Delhi, June 29, 1990)

Ram Janmabhoomi

Sir: Mr. Abhas Chatterjee has accused me of widening the scope of the debate (I.E., June 29). But he has himself brought in Muslim shrines in Ayodhya and questioned the divine origin of the Quran!

Regarding the travelogue of Tieffenthaler, I have the German text whose exact translation in English is as follows:

"But the famous place is the one called Sita Rasoi, or the so-called table of Sita, wife of Rama, which is (situated) on a southern side of the town on a high earthen mound.

"The castle, which was called Ramkot, was pulled down by the Emperor Aurangzeb and he built a mosque with three domes on its

place. Others think that it has been built by Babar. One still sees 14 black stone, five 'ellen' high pillars *of the old castle....*

"On the left (of the building) one sees a square box elevated five 'zoll' above the ground, and covered with limestone, five ellen (yards) long and four ellen (yards) wide. The Indians call it Vedi (Bedi), or the crib, in which (it is said) stood the house where Vishnu appeared and was born in the form of Rama;...

"...The people show their superstitious respect to *both the places*; the place where stood the birthhouse of Rama, people go around it three times, and show respect by prostrating on the ground."

The discrepancies between the Latin-French-English version of Mr. Chatterjee and this German translation are obvious. I had asked for the reference to the original Latin text and not the French translation. It is clear that according to Tieffenthaler the common belief of the Hindus was that the birthsite of Lord Rama was marked by the square box or the crib (the Vedi or Bedi). Incidentally, the square box still exists just where Tieffenthaler saw it — to the South of the southern dome just as Sita Rasoi exists where he saw it — to the north of the northern dome, both distinct and separate from the Babri Masjid. *The point is that both the sacred spots were and are outside the Babri Masjid. So the birthsite cannot be the spot now claimed — the site of the Manbar under the Mihrab of the central dome,* where Lord Rama is said to have manifested himself in the form of small idols on the night of 22-23 December, 1949.

Mr. Chatterjee does not follow the point I made about Ramkot. Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir was not just another temple, if it ever existed. It was presumably the most important edifice in Ayodhya, the city of Rama, *on top of the citadel of Ramkot,* an obvious target of any fanatic conqueror. Therefore, *if Ramkot was destroyed in an invasion, the temple could not have survived.* Now Mr. Chatterjee says that the citadel was 'no more than a shadow of its past glory by the time of Babar's invasion'! Was it at the pinnacle of its glory when the Turks and Pathans took Ayodhya in 1194 ? Did they destory it ? if they did, then Babar cannot be accused and then no temple existed when Babar or Mir Baqi constructed the Babri Masjid. If they did not, the whole theory of *Muslim fanaticism and iconoclasm is but a myth.* And, therefore, the only conclusion is that no temple ever existed on that site.

It is strange that according to Mr. Chatterjee while the Ramkot citadel was a shadow of its former glory, the Janmasthan Temple was

still blazing in all its pristine glory ! The two cannot go together. Now, even Mr. Singhal concedes that the Ram Temple was constructed on that site in the 11th century which is not plausible because *during the whole of the 11th century the Kingdom of Kanauj was under repeated attack and monuments are not constructed during wartime, far less in invasion-prone areas.*

Regarding the antiquity of other supposed Ram temples in the country, I rely on the information contained in the book by Akshay Brahmachari. But that is not an essential link in the chain.

That famous temples survived into Aurangzeb's time also supports the view that the *theory of destruction of Hindu temples by Muslim kings as a religious duty is also a myth.*

Mr. Chatterjee does not even know that the pillars do not *support* the mosque or the arches; the pillars are used only decoratively. It does not make any difference if they are 7-8 ft. or 5-6 ft. in height. How could such pillars, I repeat, support the monumental structure of Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir ?

Mr. Chatterjee should know that the term 'Rama motif' does not merely mean the image of the presiding deity but of symbols associated with him. The carvings on the pillars are secular in character and suggest that they belonged to a dwelling. The East India Company traveller, Montgomery Martin in 1840 attributed them to the palaces of Rajput rajas along the Saryu.

I do not see at all the logic behind Mr. Chatterjee's insistence, even if one concedes that the pillars once belonged to a temple, that the temple to which they belonged occupied the present site of Babri Masjid or that there was no time-gap between its collapse or desolation and the construction of Babri Masjid or that, above all, it was a Rama temple. Mr. Chatterjee should concede the possiblity of dislocation in both space and time. Otherwise he has to prove that the building to which the pillars belonged stood on the site, that the building was a temple, and that the temple marked the birthsite of Lord Rama.

In the 1855 conflict in Ayodhya, the Muslims used Babri Masjid (Mr. Chatterjee calls it Janmasthan) as the base of operation. There is no question of forcible occupation of the Babri Masjid as it was very much in the hands of Muslims and in their use. I have read contemporary documents. Which contemporary accounts and documents does Mr. Chatterjee rely on to say that the clash was sparked by Muslim attempt to fix a wooden gate in the inner compound wall of the

Babri Masjid ? I again emphasise that until 1949 there was no Hindu claim on Babri Masjid. Even in the 1885 case, the map submitted by the Mahant of Ram Chabootra showed Babri Masjid as Masjid and his plaint made not even a whisper of claim on Babri Masjid.

I repeat that a historical claim must be based on *contemporary accounts or evidence* and not on later hearsay or fabrication. All said and done, Mr. Chatterjee is yet to come forward with any contemprary evidence about the construction of the temple; when it is supposed to have been constructed; about its existence in 1194 when Muslims appeared on the scene; about its continued existence under Muslim rule from 1194 to 1528, when it is said to have been destroyed by Babar. Why is it that to Mr. Chatterjee, Fa Hian and Huan Tsang are less reliable than Tieffanthaler, when the first two should have actually seen the temple if it existed, and Tieffanthaler was merely recording a hearsay ?

Let people judge who has an open mind and who wishes to believe in a myth because of his inherent predilections and prejudices.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

14, Janpath
NEW DELHI-1
July 23
(*Indian Express*, New Delhi, July 28, 1990)

Ram Janmabhoomi : More Evidence

By Abhas Kumar Chatterjee

In his latest rejoinder (28.7.90), Syed Shahabuddin has given his own translation of carefully chosen and disjointed (we shall later see why) excerpts of the German version of Tieffenthaler's work. He has imagined that 'discrepancies' between his version and mine are 'obvious'. But in truth there is no material difference between the two. As the readers may themselves notice, his version is the same as mine, almost word for word. Since Mr. Shahabuddin finds the discrepancies 'obvious', why doesn't he point out what they are ?

Mr. Shahabuddin has performed a triple-skulduggery on readers by implying that

(a) the Sita Ki Rasoi shrine described by Tieffenthaler refers to the tiny Sita-Kitchen enclosure in the north-western corner of the courtyard of the Babri mosque,

(b) This tiny enclosure was one of "the both places" Tieffenthaler found being used by the Hindus for worship in 1767,
(c) this enclosure and the Ram Chabootara in the courtyard of the Babri mosque are outside the mosque.

None of this is true. Mr. Shahabuddin has been repeatedly informed through these columns that Tieffenthaler's description of the 'Kitchen of Sita' refers to the new Janmasthan (or Sita Ki Rasoi) temple situated across the road on a separate mound to the north of the Babri mosque. This impressive temple had been built by Naval Rai, the influential Hindu Minister of the Nawab of Oudh in the mid-18th century not long before Tieffenthaler's visit and was found by the traveller, quite expectedly, to have been an "even more famous place" than the "long edifice constructed by Naval Rai near the Swargadwar temple" also around the same time.

Mr. Shahabuddin's second argument, viz. that Tieffenthaler saw the Sita Ki Rasoi "to the north of the northern dome" of the Babri mosque is equally false. As the readers may see from Mr. Shahabuddin's own translation, Tieffenthaler never said so. Indeed, there is no reference at all in Tieffenthaler's account to the small Sita-Kitchen enclosure within the mosque.The traveller first describes the triple-cupola mosque building, then the Ram Chabootara in its courtyard, and concludes by saying that inspite of Aurangzeb's efforts to prevent them, the Hindus continued to offer worship "at both places" i.e. in the mosque-building and its courtyard. No wonder, Mr. Shahabuddin has cleverly omitted the following crucial bit of Tieffenthaler's travelogue from his translation:

"Aurangzeb, or according to some other people, Babur, destroyed the place in order to prevent the heathens from practising their superstitions. But they have continued to perform their ceremonies in both the places, knowing this to have been the birthplace of Rama....."

The third link in Mr. Shahabuddin's thesis, namely that the Ram Chabootara and the small Sita-Kitchen enclosure are "outside the Babri mosque' is equally contrary to facts. He does not even know that the Ram Chabootara is not situated to the "south of the southern dome" (probably he has not yet visited the site) but to the east of the mosque. Anyone who has visited the site knows that the two shrines are situated in the L-shaped front courtyard which is part and parcel of the Babri mosque enclosed by a compound wall which is flush with the building wall on the back-side. One cannot enter the mosque except through this

courtyard. Two of the 14 pillars of the old Rama Janmabhoomi temple used in the mosque support the gate that provides the only access to the courtyard and building. In fact, until the L-shaped railing was erected through the courtyard by the British after the 1855 clash between Hindus and Muslims at the site, the whole courtyard was one. It is therefore significant that Mr. Shahabuddin has excluded another critical bit of Tieffenthaler's account from his translation which would have directly contradicted his unprecedented interpretion of the Babri mosque's parameters:

"The two areas are surrounded by a low crenellated wall. One can enter the front room through a small door in the middle."

Once again Mr. Shahabuddin has attempted to confuse the basic issue by saying that "the manbar under the mehrab of the central dome" cannot be claimed as the birthsite" of Rama. He has forgotten my repeated contention that the actual birthsite of Rama, if any, is irrelevant to the dispute. It is as irrelevant as it would be to ask whether Mohammed indeed climbed to heaven one night and, if so, whether he did so exactly at the spot where the Dome on the Rock stands in Jerusalem. The only question is *whether or not Babur had destroyed a Hindu shrine to construct the mosque.* No one has made the ridiculous claim that the old Rama Janmabhoomi temple had occupied only the meagre 15' x' 15' (or so) of land that later became the "manbar under the mehrab of the central dome" of the Babri structure, let alone Lord Rama having been born exactly on that spot. All that is relevant, and is claimed by the pro-Janmabhoomi people, is that the Babri structure, including its courtyard, occupies the place where the old Hindu temple stood.

If the logic of Mr. Shahabuddin's argument is accepted, it would follow that the old Janmabhoomi temple and Sita Ki Rasoi shrine stood where the courtyard of the mosque is at present, whereas the fortress of Ramkot stood where now are the three domes of the mosque. Anyone who has visited the site and noticed the meagre distance that separates the courtyard from the domed structure would realize how untenable this hypothesis is. However, even if we accept it, it would only prove that the Rama Janmabhoomi shrine was a part of the Ramkot and Babur destroyed the whole thing to raise the present structure. In Mr. Shahabuddin's own words, "if Ramkot was destroyed in an invasion, the temple could not have survived". That is precisely what I have been arguing, happened during Babur's invasion.

Regarding the pillars, Mr. Shahabuddin has allowed his imagination to take wings in presuming that the Rama Janmabhoomi temple must have been "a monumental structure" or "the most important *edifice*" (italics mine) in Ayodhya. Perhaps he does not know that in Hindu tradition, the sanctity (*māhātmya*) of a shrine dose not depend on the size of the edifice or the height of the spire. The Kailash Man-Sarovar is one of the holiest Hindu shrines on earth, but contains no temple at all. The holy Amarnath is but a cave. The sacred shrine of Sabarimalai boasts of nothing more than a small temple on top of the hill. That the Rama Janmabhoomi was one of the most sacred shrines in Ayodhya, and a beautiful temple as testified by the surviving pillars, does not necessarily mean that it had tall towers or a massive structure.

It is evident that Mr. Shahabuddin has introduced such surmises only to sustain his argument that the pillars used in the Babri mosque were not good enough to support the temple. In effect, he is arguing that the temple, if there, must have been such as could not have been supported by 8' pillars, and since the pillars are only 8' high, (forgetting further that they are only pieces of the original columns), there could have been no temple at all. This is indeed fantastic logic.

On top of that, Mr. Shahabuddin betrays another misconception that the temple-pillars do not presently *support* the mosque. He should know that each of the 12 pillars used inside the mosque-building bears a good part of the load of the superstructure. It may be no oversight that he avoided to translate a third relevant portion of Tieffenthaler's account which says "12 of these columns now *support* (italics mine) the inside arcades of the mosque". It is also amazing that Mr. Shahabuddhin should imply that these 7-8 feet pillars could have supported a palace, or even a temple at some other site in another period, but not the Janmabhoomi temple at the same site in Babur's time !

Mr. Shahabuddin has wriggled on the question of carvings on the pillars. In his last rejoinder (12.5.90) he wrote, "In fact, the pillars are devoid of any Rama motifs", but now he informs us that by Rama motifs he did not mean Rama motifs, but "symbols associated with him". I described in my last rejoinder how the pillars contain typical, classical religious carvings of *Purna-Kalash*, lotus, *yaksha, devkanya* in *tribhanga* pose and so on, which are all strongly indicative of temple sculpture. But Mr. Shahabuddin tells us these are secular motifs! Probably he could also tell us what religious motifs a Hindu temple ought to have, and what "symbols associated with Rama" was he

expecting to be engraved on the pillars of the Rama Janmabhoomi temple.

Mr. Shahabuddin has obviously misunderstood Montgomery Martin. The latter *did not say* that the pillars used in the Babri mosque came from palaces of Rajput kings along the Saryu. Martin ocupied himself mainly with examining the tradition that King Vikramaditya had constructed as many as 360 temples at Ayodhya on sites and locations associated with Rama. On grounds of dating and chronology, he rejected this tradition (while conceding that Vikramaditya may have constructed *some* temples) and came to the conclusion that the ruins of Ramkot represented structures built by Rama himself. "I am inclined to suppose," said Martin, "that *it was a part of the building actually erected by Rama*". (Does Mr. Shahabuddin accept that ?). In keeping with this, Martin inferred that the pillars used in the mosque may have come *from the ancient palace of Rama* " that was occupied by the princes of the family of the Sun", rather than from a temple of Rama built by Vikramaditya. To quote Martin,

"The only thing.....that could with probability be traced to the *ancient city*, are some pillars in the mosque built by Babur. That they have been taken from a Hindu building is evident from the traces of images being observable on some of their bases; although the images have been cut off to satisfy the conscience of the bigot. *It is possible that these pillars have belonged to a temple* built by Vikrama; but I think the existence of such temples doubtful; and *if they did not exist*, it is probable that the pillars were taken from the ruins of *the palace*." (italics mine).

As we know, the pillars were subsequently dated to 11th century, but if Mr. Shahabuddin prefers to agree with Martin's conclusion, I have no objection at all.

Mr. Shahabuddin has got his history all wrong when he imagines that no temple could have been constructed at Ayodhya in the 11th century because Kanauj was under repeated attacks during this period. Historical evidence is just the opposite. "The last hundred years before the final Hindu subjugation seems to have been most profitable for Ayodhya. The Gahadvalas not only practised a policy of protecting holy places, but even endeavoured to reinforce them...." (Hans Bakker). Hermann Kulke also narrates how the Hindu Kings of area between 1000 and 1200 A.D. constructed new temples and extended royal patronage to places of pilgrimage of regional and all-India importance.

The Gahadvala King Chandradeva visited Ayodhya on 23rd October 1093 and performed *Pooja* at Swargadwar temple. Nearly a century later, his successor King Jayachandra of Kannauj built the Tretanath temple at Ayodhya (later destroyed and replaced by a mosque by Aurangzeb) in 1184 A.D., just ten years before the invasion of Muhammad Ghori, and an inscription commemorating it is still available at the Faizabad museum.

Mr. Shahabuddin betrays utter ignorance of Hindu traditions by suggesting that the Rama Janmabhoomi shrine could not have remained a sacred shrine of great reverence and popularity at a time when Ramkot as a whole was dwindling and decaying. In fact, during the Muslim rule, when the bigotry of the rulers led to an inevitable decay and destruction of Hindu temples, their holy spots continued to remain sacred and attracted the faithful with unremitted devotion. Nicolai Manucci, the Italian traveller who lived in India throughout Aurangzeb's reign has recorded:

".....although King Aurangzeb destroyed numerous temples, there does not thereby fail to be many left at different places..... All of them are thronged with worshippers; even those that are destroyed are still venerated by the Hindus and visited for the offering of alms."

The continued reverence of Hindus for their sacred spots such as the Rama Janmabhoomi long after the decline of Hindu political power and the physical decline of Hindu temples and buildings concommittant with the rise of Mohammedan rulers, was therefore a common and natural phenomenon.

Regarding the 1855 clash at the Janmabhoomi site, Mr. Shahabuddin keeps claiming that he has read contemporary documents, without giving us the privilege of knowing what these documents are and what do they say. On the other hand, the veracity of the account presented by me can be checked from *Hadiqa-i-Shuhada* by Mirza Jan, *Qaisar-ut-Tawarikh* by Kamaluddin and Foreign Department Political Consultations No.356 dated 28.12.1855. It is indeed astounding that in the face of all the contrary evidence discussed in these columns, and totally inconsistent with Tieffenthaler's excerpts presented by himself, Mr. Shahabuddin should unabashedly proclaim that there was no Hindu claim on Babri mosque until 1949. In 1902, Neville recorded:

"The cause of the occurrence was one of the numerous disputes that have sprung up from time to time between the Hindu priests and the Mussalmans of Ayodhya with regard to the ground on which form-

erly stood the Janmasthan temple, which was destroyed by Babur and replaced by a mosque..... The ground being peculiarly sacred to the Hindus, was at once seized by the Bairagis and others, thus affording a fertile source of friction." (Bara Banki Gazetteer, 1902)

The 1905 Faizabad Gazetteer records:

"It is said that upto this time (i.e. till 1855), both Hindus and Mussalmans used to worship in the same building; but since the mutiny an outer enclosure has been put up in front of the mosque and the Hindus who are forbidden access to the inner yard, make their offerings on a platform which they have raised in the outer one."

In 1870 A.D., Carnegie wrote that till 1855, "Hindus and Mussalmans alike used to worship in the mosque-temple". The old Oudh Gazetteer of 1875 says exactly the same thing. Is Mr. Shahabuddin telling us that all these records are to be wished away ?

Mr. Shahabuddin rejects Tieffenthaler as a mere "hearsay" because he did not *actually see* the temple, his travelogue is not a 'contemporary evidence' and was written many years after the event. He forgets that much of the world's history is based on subsequent accounts. The Quran in its present form was compiled several years after Mohammed's death. No one had actually seen or heard Allah making his revelations to the Prophet. People who heard the Prophet speak are believed to have managed to remember his words exactly and passed the tradition down orally until such oral traditions (along with some scattered writings available till then) were collected, compiled and recorded in its present form a considerable period later. Does Mr. Shahabuddin call it hearsay ?

Mr. Shahabuddin is also piqued at my raising the question of divine origin of Quran. He forgets that I had mentioned it in my article only to illustrate how such myths form the basis of all religious faiths. It is Mr. Shahabuddin who boastfully claimed that he could produce contemporary evidence to prove that the contents of the Quran were *actually* revealed by Allah himself to Prophet Mohammed. He has, however, failed to live up to that claim till now. He also brought up the question of Muslim shrines in Ayodhya by making the unfounded claim that Ayodhya had been a centre of Islamic learning and piety for 800 years. When facts were cited to show that major Islamic shrines in Ayodhya reflect barbarity rather than piety, he accused me of bias!

It is amazing that Mr. Shahabuddin should raise the question why I don't refer to Fa Hian's and Huen Tsang's reports. Readers would recall what Mr. Shahabuddin wrote in his earlier (12.5.90) rejoinder:

"Mr. Chatterjee has made his task easier by dating the columns (and by implication the temple) to the 11th century..... By one stroke he has also explained why the magnificient Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir was not seen by Fa Hian and Huen Tsang and why it was not a landmark of Buddhist Ayodhya." Having agreed that a temple constructed in 11th century could not possibly find mention in travelogues of 5th and 7th centuries, is it not riduculous to ask why I don't rely on the latter?

I am surprised Mr. Shahabuddin should repeat his curious thesis that Babur could not have destroyed the temple because had there ever been a temple, his predecessor Muslim rulers would have already destroyed it! Will he kindly see the fallacy of this argument pointed out in my last rejoinder (28.6.90).

Finally, I am afraid Mr. Shahabuddin has betrayed his total ignorance of India's history by making his preposterous proposition that "Muslim fanaticism and iconoclasm is a myth". Even an ordinary student of history can tell him how from Mohammed-bin-Qasim to Mahmud of Ghazni, Mohammed Ghori, Qutubuddin Aibak, Alauddin Khilji, Firuz Shah Tughlakh, Timur, Sikandar Lodi, Babur, Aurangzeb, Ahmad Shah Abdali, etc. right down to Tipu Sultan, the annals of Islam in India have been one gory tale of religious fanaticism, bigotry, iconoclasm and barbarity; not to mention hundreds of smaller characters in the shape of provincial Sultans in Bengal, Malwa, Kanauj, Bijapur, Jaunpur etc., as well as the Sufis and missionaries of Islam. Evidence on this "probably the bloodiest story in history" (Will Durant) can be presented in several volumes if Mr. Shahabuddin so desires. For an elementary knowledge I can only recommend to him to start with a brief account called *Hindu Temples: What Happened To Them* by Arun Shourie and others (Voice of India, New Delhi, 1990) which contains the result of a preliminary survey that has identified 1864 mosques, *dargahs, mazars, idghas* and other Islamic structures which were built by Muslim rulers all over India by destroying Hindu (including Jain and Buddhist) temples and erecting on the same sites and/or using their material (if Mr. Shahabuddin wishes, complete break-up of the data can be given). These mute witnesses tell us what is history and what is myth.

Mr. Shahabuddin has shown how far one can go in the political abuse of history, how much one can stray from truth in order to turn history into myth. It is for the multitude of India's people to decide how they would like to respond to such abuse.

34/60 Bailey Road,
Patna, India.
14th August 1990.

(This article was sent to Editor, *Indian Express* on 14.8.90 but was never published. The reasons of non-publication are not known).

Appendix 5

Not Impartial

by B.B. Lal

(The following letter from Professor B.B. Lal was published in *The Times of India* dated 1 March, 1991. It was prompted by an intemperate attack mounted on him by Professor Irfan Habib in an address to the Aligarh Historians Group at the Aligarh Muslim University delivered on 12 February, 1991. A detailed examination of Irfan Habib's performance has been made by Professor A.K. Sinha in two articles published in *Sunday* of April 7-13 and 14-20. We are giving a brief background of the Aligarh stalwart as well as a summary of the address so that Professor B.B. Lal's letter may be read in a proper perspective.

Irfan Habib of the Aligarh Muslim University is a well-known Stalinist historian along with Romila Thapar, S. Gopal, Bipan Chandra, R.S. Sharma and the rest. He has proved himself to be a worthy son of the late Professor Mohammed Habib of the same university. A life-long admirer of Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, Mohammed Habib had become a mentor of Jawaharlal Nehru by floating two famous theories. Firstly, he had propounded that the Muslim conquest of India was a myth; what had really happened was a "turn of public opinion" when Hindu masses, "oppressed by the Brahmanical caste system", had gone over to the missionaries of Islam who had brought a "message of human brotherhood and social equality." He had thus set aside in one sweep the hundreds of histories written by medieval Muslim chroniclers and telling the blood-soaked story of Islamic invasion, stage by stage. Secondly, he had explained away the destruction of Hindu temples by Islamic invaders in terms of economic motives. The destroyers, he said, were attracted by the rich wealth stored in the temple treasuries and not inspired by the theology of Islam vis-a-vis other people's places of worship. He had thus salvaged Islam as a

religion of tolerance by sacrificing a few sultans. Small wonder that Pandit Nehru had seen in him an excellent exponent of Secularism.

Irfan Habib has inherited his father's mantle in terms of status as well as mission. He has been a close associate of the Stalinist clique which, starting from the days of Pandit Nehru's dominance, has come to control all institutions concerned with researching, writing and teaching of India's history, particularly the Indian History Congress (IHC), the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The clique catapulted him into the chairmanship of the ICHR, an office which members of the clique have occupied by turn for years on end. A second term in the same office was secured for him by Abdullah Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid at Delhi and the great friend of the erstwhile Prime Minister, V.P. Singh. It is while occupying this august office that Irfan Habib has launched personal attacks on historians and archaeologists who have been honest to their profession and come out openly against the antics of the Stalinist clique in the context of the Ayodhya controversy.

In his address under reference, Irfan Habib starts by invoking Mahatma Gandhi as a true devotee of Ram whom the "false" devotees of Ram — RSS and VHP etc. — murdered 43 years ago. He is confident that few people remember the role which his school of historians played in propping up the case for Pakistan, the creation of which led to the murder of the Mahatma! Next, he character-assassinates the noted historians and archaeologists who have supported the VHP case, namely, B.P. Sinha, S.P. Gupta, K.S. Lal and B.R. Grover. He forgets that some of these professors have been praised by him in the past for their professional competence! His choicest jibes, however, are reserved for Professor B.B. Lal. He remembers no more that the same B.B. Lal was being quoted by his clique only a few months earlier in support of the thesis that the Ayodhya of Valmiki did not exist in the remote *Treta Yuga* ! He remembers no more that as late as September 1990 B.B. Lal had been requested by him to represent the ICHR at the World Archaeological Congress held in Venezuela ! But what is worst, he misrepresents B.B. Lal's mission in carrying out excavations at Hastinapur during 1949-50. He says that "B.B. Lal went to Hastinapur with the preconceived notion that he was going to dig a very ancient site but what he got was Painted Greyware (PGW)." He believes that nobody has read or remembers what B.B. Lal wrote regarding his mis-

sion in *Ancient India*, nos. 10-11, pp. 6-7. Irfan Habib would have been more honest if he had said that he was attacking B.B. Lal for no other reason than the latter's discovery of pillar-bases which revealed the existence of a pre-Babri Masjid structure at the same site.

(Text of the letter)

Sir: Apropos your report "Irfan Habib flays VHP historians" (February 20), it is a matter of regret that senior historians should indulge in mudslinging, imputing motives and consciously omitting facts to suit their theories. But what is more regrettable is that the chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, Mr. Irfan Habib, who is expected to set an example in academic debate on historical matters, should also fall in line with these historians.

On February 10 during the course of Dr. Moti Chandra Memorial Lecture on *The Ramayana*: *An Archaeological Appraisal* at Vijayawada, I was asked by some members of the audience how exactly it could be determined that there was or was not a temple underneath the mosque, I replied, as any archaeologist would do, that the only way out was to dig and find out. No amount of verbal debate can be a substitute.

This reply of mine was played up by 20 historians who in a joint statement said: "Mr. Lal by arguing for fresh excavations at the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya would be fulfilling the demand of those who wanted the Babri Masjid to be demolished to construct the temple at the site" and added that this was being suggested by me "under the impetus of current *Hindutva* campaign".

As an archaeologist I have nothing to do with this side or that. If it is honestly the intention of all concerned to know what exactly preceded the mosque, further excavation alone is the answer. Let it be added that these excavations can be done without in any way harming the structure of the mosque. Mr. Irfan Habib has also sought to fling mud at me. Referring to my excavation at Hastinapura he has stated: Prof. Lal "went to Hastinapura with the preconceived notion that he was going to find a very ancient site. He found 'Painted Greyware'. Since this culture had to be pre-iron to be ancient, at least of 1500 B.C., Professor Lal reported that no iron was found".

Mr. Habib has thus accused me of (a) going to Hastinapura with a "preconceived" notion, and (b) reporting that "no iron was found". The excavations at Hastinapura, undertaken 40 years ago, constituted a part

of my planned approach to throw light on the 'dark age' of India's past between the end of the Indus civilisation (*circa 1500 B.C.*) and the beginning of the early historical period (*circa 500 B.C.*). This was duly spelt out in the very first paragraph of my Hastinapura report published in 1955. There was no question of any preconceived notion.

The facts were reported correctly. The presence of lumps of iron ore and slag was enough indicator that these people were familiar with iron-working.

Mr. Habib argued that the Ayodhya in the legend was not the Ayodhya of our times as the eminent archaeologists Mr. M.C. Joshi, too, has contended. He has very conveniently chosen to refer to Mr. M.C. Joshi's article published in the *Puratattva,* no. 11 (1982), but not to my reply published in the same journal (no. 16, 1987), in which I had offered my comments on Mr. Joshi's arguments and had clearly demonstrated that what is known as Ayodhya today was indeed the Ayodhya of the Valmiki *Ramayana.*

B.B. Lal
Director General (retd.)
Archaeological Survey of India

New Delhi

Appendix 6

Party-line history-writing

by Koenraad Elst

Case against Ram temple untenable

Power corrupts. If you have been in control of the intellectual arena for too long, your arguments become sloppy. You think you can get away with anything and you expect to marginalize opponents just by hurling your authoritative swearwords at them. Even in your distortions you become uncareful. That is the story of the JNU historians.

In India, Leftist historians have so far managed to retain their respectability and even dominance in their sector of academe. The signs are that this may change very soon.

In Europe in the seventies, the intellectual arena was equally dominated by Marxism. Even rightist papers did not defy Marxist-imposed terminology, such as *"dictator* Pinochet" but *"president* Ceaucescu". Marxist thought categories were imbibed and reproduced by everyone. But the tide turned when many Marxists came to their senses, and turned around to expose Marxist misconceptions and lies. Today, a "Marxist historian" counts as a joke. Like that Belgian author who, in the Marxist-Leninist party paper, furnished "historical proof" that the secret protocol to the 1939 Hitler-Stalin treaty was a CIA concoction : the same week the glasnosted Soviet authorities published the full text of the "concocted" secret protocol.

In the Soviet block, historians who have twisted the truth to suit the party-line, stand helplessly exposed. Wise leaders like Vaclav Havel have prevented a witch-hunt against these collaborators with falsehood, and assured the safety of their lives and jobs. But no one can save their shattered intellectual respectability.

In India too, Leftist historians are becoming nervous. That much is clear from the uncareful reply by three well-known JNU historians (IE, 5/12/90) to dr. S.P. Gupta's report on the archaeological findings at the disputed site in Ayodhya (IE, 2/12/90). Their statement violates both methodology and the conventions of academic debate.

Betraying their weakness in substantive arguments, they start out with personal attacks on two colleagues. About dr. Gupta, they insinuate he was not involved in the excavations. Do they really think dr. Gupta would invite his peers' indignation by falsely claiming participation? They themselves can get away with anything, because they are shielded by a partisan press. But a genuine scientist would not count on such an exemption from criticism, and would take care not to tell lies. Dr. Gupta had "observer" status, and never claimed more than that he was "*connected* with the research work at the site".

Their insinuation against prof. B.B. Lal is even worse. In their well-known pamphlet, the JNU professors had made use of prof. Lal's finding that Ayodhya was not inhabited before 700 BC, but glossed over and even starkly denied his other finding, that there are on the disputed site leftovers of an 11th century building. Pof. Lal set the record straight in an article in *Manthan* (10/90), and the JNU historians were forced to face two facts:
(1) Their contention that "so far no historical evidence has been unearthed" for a pre-Babri temple on the site, has been disproven. Whether the building was a temple is up for discussion, but its very existence is now undeniable.
(2) Their attempt to ditort the argument by concealing pertinent historical material has been exposed.

To escape, the JNU historians postulate a contradiction between B.B.Lal's report stating that "the site was again occupied around the 11th century AD" and that "several later medieval brick-and-kankar lime floors have been met with", and his "new claim" that he found pillar-bases of what may have been a temple at the site. This contradiction is fictional : both times, prof. Lal asserts that there was a pre-Babri building there, and neither time does he overstep the limits of his finding by asserting that it was a temple (whether it was one, is for other indications to decide). But the JNU historians go on to insinuate not once but twice that the "change" in prof. Lal's position was occasioned by VHP Janmabhoomi politics.

Among scholars, this is a most serious allegation: twisting research findings in order to suit political exigencies. But what distortion the JNU historians have seen in B.B. lal's "new" position, is in fact in the eye of the

beholder. That they themselves have amply practised party-line history-writing, is verifiable from their own statements on Ayodhya. In these, the JNU historians propose a scenario that no non-partisan historian would have come up with: it is not substantiated by any positive evidence, and it goes against general historical knowledge.

(1) Their earlier claim that the disputed spot was empty until the Babri Masjid was built, goes against all we know of city lay-out especially in temple cities. The disputed site is the highest in central Ayodhya, the place of honour. In no city in the world, much less a temple city, would it have been left empty. Their new line of defence, that a small non-temple was there, not even overlapping with the present Masjid site (but then why was it demolished ?), is unlikely for the same reason; it is also very artificial and dependent on assumptions that may not survive an eventual excavation underneath the Masjid.

(2) While dr. Gupta and prof. Lal claim to have scientifically dated the pillar-bases to the 11th century, and the pottery to the 13th to 15th century, the JNU historians reject these conclusions out of hand without even investigating the dating method. If it is unsound, prove it; if not, accept the results.

(3) The hypothesis that a temple was there and that its material was employed in the mosque, is entirely coherent, both internally and with the general historical context. It is coherent with the devotion of the people that, after many centuries of temple-building in Ayodhya, they should have reserved the place of honour for a temple. It is coherent with the Muslim conquerors' well-attested habit of destroying temples, building mosques on top of them, and displaying the victory over paganism by visibly employing some parts of the same destroyed temple, that they should have done the same things in Ayodhya.

(4) In their earlier statement, the JNU historians had said that the story of a temple having been demolished there, only appears in the 19th century. But in fact there are at least seven independent testimonies by local Muslims and foreign travellers, two of them older than the 19th century, four more claiming pre-19-century sources, and six of them outside the sphere of British influence, each of which states that the (Babri) "Masjid-i-Janmasthan" was believed to have replaced a Ram temple. Four of them testify that the Hindus came to offer puja on a platform just next to the mosque, one 18th-century source specifying Ram Navami.

Even without these testimonies (uncontradicted by any other contemporary documents) that this puja was offered in continuation of a

pre-Masjid tradition, a non-partisan historian still would have surmised it, because the alternative goes against all we know. There is just no case anywhere of Hindus risking a lot of trouble with the then-dominant Muslims by *starting* an exclusively Hindu worship (as opposed to common worship of a local saint) in a mosque courtyard. If they exceptionally did this in the Ayodhya case, it was because the place, even without the temple, was exceptionally sacred for them.

Swan song of Jawaharlal Nehru's historians

The JNU historians' thesis that the Babri Masjid did not replace any pre-existent Ram temple, goes against common sense in a number of respects. The well-attested fact that the Hindus offered Ram Puja in the mosque courtyard even under Muslim rule, the lines of 11th-century pillar-bases aligned with walls of the present structure, the black pillars incorporated in it, the Hindu and even specifically Vaishanava sculptures they carry, all these indications do not favour the JNU thesis. Rather, they converge on the thesis of a pre-existent Ram Mandir replaced by the Babri Masjid. This Ram Mandir thesis also satisfies the principle of coherence : it is in perfect conformity with historically attested behaviour patterns of Hindu devotees and Muslim conquerors.

By contrast, the JNU thesis requires a number of peculiar assumptions: the tradition associating the place with Ram was created out of nothing while the place was occupied by a mosque; the place of honour overlooking Ayodhya was not used for building a temple; the Masjid builders went elsewhere to collect the black pillars from a temple, at which other place no mosque was built (for no other mosque with that kind of pillar-stones is known). For every coherent explanation that dr. Gupta and other pro-Ram writers have come up with, the JNU historians have constructed complicated and less probable alternatives.

Of course, probability and common sense may be overruled by positive evidence demonstrating a more uncommon course of events. However, the historians have not presented a single piece of evidence positively proving any of the implicit components of their thesis:

1. The Masjid was built on empty land.
2. If not on empty land, then the pre-Masjid building was a small non-temple.
3. This pre-Masjid non-temple was demolished in the year X (not 1528) for reason Y (not *jihad*).

4. If a temple, it was an X temple, not a Ram temple.
5. The black pillars were brought from temple X far away, which had been demolished by Y for reason Z.
6. Between 1528 and 1855, the courtyard of the Masjid was used by Muslims to the exclusion of Hindus.
7. If it was used by Hindus, it was a post-1528 tradition, started in the year X on occasion Y.
8. Before the British time, Hindus believed that the spot to which they persistently returned for puja, was sacred to event X in the career of god Y (not Ram's birth).
9. Since the story of the pre-existent Ram Mandir is not true, it must have been concocted by someone. Let's say the British concocted the Janmabhoomi story. Since this is not just a convenient allegation, secularist historians with all their "scientific temper" must have traced the facts. So, the British colonel X wanted to create trouble in Awadh and devised ploys A, B and C for fomenting Hindu-Muslim riots. Ploy C, already tried and tested in other parts P and Q of India, consisted in raking up controversy over temples converted into mosques. Since there were no such mosques in all of Awadh, he decided to create a rumour of a Ram Janmabhoomi temple destroyed and replaced with the Babri Masjid. After all, orientalist O had told him all about the Hindoo superstitions concerning Ram. So he instructed captain Y to set up a rumour squad. Interpreter R and goondas S and T were recruited and sent into action. They persuaded gullible panda Z, who in the year H led the Hindus into an inaugural puja in the Babri Masjid courtyard, much to the indignation of mullah M, who demanded Nawab N's intervention. Of the twelve documents involved in the operation, including captain Y's report to his superior, orientalist O's article about the affair, mullah M's petition to the Nawab, the note recording the payment to goondas S and T, and interpreter R's letter to his brother back home, at least seven or so should still be available in the copious and well-kept British archives: an easy dig for "eminent" historians.

Well, so far there is not one single piece of positive proof for any of the aforementioned components of the anti-Mandir thesis. Not one of the X's and Y's in the above list of facts implied in this thesis has been identified. By contrast, there are many indications, though as yet no absolute proof, for the thesis that a Ram temple stood on the disputed spot before the Babri Masjid was built. Therefore, any non-prejudiced historian would, until proof of the contrary, provisionally accept the hypothesis that

the temple existed, and even look favourably upon the subordinate hypothesis that it was a Ram temple.

However, the JNU historians are not unprejudiced. Prof. A.R. Khan has already shown up some clear attempts at deception in the JNU pamphlet (IE, 25/2 and 1/4). One clear example is this. They have used as an argument against the temple demolition: "Nor is there any reference in Babar's memoirs to the destruction of any temple in Ayodhya." This is an "argument from silence", i.e. the inference that something has not taken place, from the fact that it is not mentioned where it would have been mentioned if it had taken place. Babar's diary is certainly a place where the temple demolition should be mentioned. Or rather, more precisly: that part of his diary recording his stay in Awadh in 1528. Now, it so happens that that very part has been lost, and is missing in all extant copies. No conclusions can be built on a non-extant testimony. Therefore, pretending Babar's non-testimony to be an "argument from silence "is just an attempt at deception.

The "secularist" press has taken care to ignore prof. Khan's critique of the JNU historians' statement. They have kept on referring to the "eminent" historians' pamphlet as Gospel. And because there is so little glasnost in the Indian intellectual arena, they have thus far succeeded in their collective effort to suppress real debate.

The JNU historians' statement on Ayodhya is part of a sustained effort to rewrite history along anti-Hindu lines. Space permits just one example, from the book *Communalism and the Writting of Indian History*, by three of them.

On p. 15-16 they write that Mahmud Ghaznavi only destroyed temples to plunder their wealth, not for religious motives: a theory in flagrant contradiction with all the contemporary evidence. Mahmud was a devout Muslim, who copied the Quran "for the benefit of his soul". He refused the huge ransom which the Hindus offered in return for an idol which he had captured, since he "preferred to be an idol-breaker rather than an idol-seller". He destroyed many non-wealthy Hindu temples and left wealthy mosques untouched. He wasted time in non-profit acts of desecration, like hanging a cow's tongue around an idol's neck. On such facts, no honest historian would build the conclusion that Mahmud was led by economical rather than religious motives.

But the JNU professors have an argument of authority. Their godfather, the bourgeois leftist Jawaharlal Nehru, has floated a similar view of Mahmud: "Mahmud was hardly a religious man. He was a Mohammedan,

of course, but that was just by the way". Nehru even portrays Mahmud as an art-loving gentleman: "Building interested him", and then quotes Mahmud's lyrical description of the vast temple complex in Mathura. What he omits, is that Mahmud's eulogy of Mathura was only a sarcastic preamble to the wholesale destruction of the complex. Presenting Mathura's destroyer as Mathura's admirer: how much more dishonest can you get?

The very first day a genuine scholar sits down to check Nehruvian history-writing against the facts, the empire of the JNU professors is finished. Because you see, facts are more eminent than even Jawaharlal Nehru and his University historians.

Babar became ghazi - 45

continued from first flap

performance and submitted another pile of papers in the name of a rejoinder. It was quite clear that the AIBMAC scholars had not even cast a glance at the documents submitted by the VHP. Obviously, the AIBMAC was in no mood to get down to brass tacks.

In the meeting held on January 10, 1991 it was decided that the evidence would be divided under four heads—history, archaeology, revenue records, law—and discussed by experts to be appointed by both sides. The lists of experts were to be submitted by January 17 and the experts themselves were to meet on January 24 for a preliminary discussion. Their findings on that date and thereafter were to be placed before a joint meeting to be held on February 6, 1991.

The VHP submitted its list of nine experts on January 17. The list of AIBMAC experts was not forthcoming till January 23 on which date it named ten experts. On the same day, the VHP added the name of another expert so that the two sides had ten experts each.

But when the next meeting took place on January 24, four of the AIBMAC experts—R.S. Sharma, Athar Ali, D.N. Jha and Suraj Bhan—advanced the strange claim that they were independent scholars and should be heard as such. The Minister rejected the claim. The next demand made by them was more fantastic. They said that they needed not less than six weeks for studying and evaluating the evidence. The VHP turned down the demand and the meeting was adjourned to the next day.

On January 25, the VHP experts reached the place of meeting at the appointed time. But the AIBMAC experts failed to turn up. That was the end of the first serious effort made by the Government of India to get the two sides together for finding an amicable settlement of the Ayodhya dispute.

The VHP had cooperated with the Government in every respect. It had kept all the dates and provided pertinent evidence all along the line. The behaviour of the AIBMAC, on the other hand, betrayed from the very start a lack of will for a serious dialogue.

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